

一色一凜

Illustration by fame

暴食の ベルゼブル

Berserk of Gluttony

俺だけレベルという概念を突破する

II

Berserk of Gluttony

– The One That Exceeds The Concept Of Levels –

- Volume 2 -

-Author-
Ichinoda Ichiri

-Artist-
Fame

[Nega Translations]



暴食の ベジルセルン

Berserk of Gluttony

俺だけレベルという概念を突破する

II 一色一凜

Illustration by fame

迫りくる溶岩の壁を衝撃で吹き飛ばしたのだ。
さらに後方のハニエルにまで届いて
膝をつかせるほどだ。

「さあ、私たちも始めよう。
フェイトはハニエルを
動けないようにして」

「足を引っ張らない
ように頑張るさ」

「その意気」

マインは黒斧を片手にハニエルへ接近。
そして右腕を押し切る。

叫び声を上げる核。
赤い目から薄らと、真っ赤な血が滲み出す。





「俺も手伝います」

初めて使う、聖剣技アーツ《グランドクロス》。
俺が魔力を聖剣に注ぎ込むと、
剣身は白く輝き始める。

「おお、これは……」

「終わらせましょう」

「ふむ、そうだな」

俺たちはさらに力のすべてを注ぎ込むため、
同時に声を張り上げる。

「「グランドクロスっ！」」

お城は聖なる光に包まれて、
何もかも真っ白になっていく。

Chapter 25

Nostalgic Hometown

Half a day riding on the carriage. I arrived at a medium-sized town called Tetra. It was only one-tenth of Royal Capital's size, but it's considerably lively regardless. Because it's the southern logistic base for the kingdom.

All kinds of products from the south were gathered in Tetra, and merchants from the capital would come to buy these products. It can be said that this is a merchant town.

Gallia was still further southward.

Although I wanted to find another carriage to hitch a ride, it's almost sunset. The possibility to be attacked by monsters rose at night.

When I actually tried to arrange for carriage ride, I was immediately declined, saying that it was impossible.

Well, it's not like I'm in a hurry, so let's stay in an inn for now. Tomorrow morning I'll come back and continue my journey.

I got quite a lot of money from the Head Servant after working as an employee in the Heart mansion. I won't be low on money until Gallia unless I splurged. Perhaps she had seen through my intention of chasing after Roxy to Gallia.

That's why the Head Servant also attempted to stop me.

[Use it sparingly]

I gripped the gold coins tightly in my hand so I wouldn't drop it as I walked across the merchant town.

I had been here once before. When I was travelling to the capital, from my hometown.

I was driven out of the village back then, so I barely had any money. I remember I had to sleep in the alley back then.

Also, I bought 3 loaf of breads with the little money I had, then travelled to the capital on foot. Back then, I thought that I'll be able to live well on the capital. But even after arriving there, it was still hard work...

The past that I don't really want to recall passed my head as I looked at the town's current state.

It was then, guuuuu.....

Apparently the insects within my stomach were requesting for food.

I could just eat the preserved food I had brought from the capital, but since I'm already here... let's give the food I hadn't had a chance to eat when I was here a try.

Great, there's that bar with a billboard hanging on a tree. After what I've been through today, I could use some drinks, so let's head there.

I opened the vintage styled door, and entered the bar.

There were 30 seats. It's actually wider than that bar I frequented in the capital. The decoration was also gorgeous for a bar.

Whilst observing the interior, I sat on the bench at the corner of the counter. That's the position I always take no matter which bar I visited.

Immediately, a clerk who were wiping the glass behind the counter called out to me.

[Ordering?]

[Yes... any suggestion?]

[Red wine if you want liquor. For meals, it's the baked rabbit meat soup with extra butter. All those will cost you 20 copper. How about it?]

[That's expensive. Someone else will consider it a rip off. Make it 15 copper, then I'll order.]

Afterward, the clerk told the order to the bar kitchen whily smiling wryly.

I paid the 15 copper in advance, then continued to observe the interior.

Half of the guest were merchants. The other half were warriors. Everyone was fairly well dressed. I can see that they were all people with plenty of money to spend. Is that why the price for the liquor and food were higher?

While enjoying the food that had been finally served, I started to think about tomorrow.

Using the carriage, I can as far south as possible by passing through big cities. I could easily replenish my supplies that way. Because once approaching Gallia, there will be nothing.

After I'm done with my meals, and was drinking the wine, I heard a commotion. I turned around to see what had happened

Over there, there were 6 warrior sitting on the same table looking down to the floor. A single man was prostrating in front of them.

That man bowed to the warriors several times. And the warrior cursed at the man each time. The more I knew about what happened, the worse my feeling became.

I wouldn't give a damn if it's the usual unrelated stuff. But, I recognized that man's face.

That guy... Why did he beg to the warriors in this place?

Unaware of me watching them, their conversation continued.

[Because of Gallia's influence there are a lot of monsters around, and it'll be too long to wait for the subjugation request to arrive. Here, please take this money, please help us drive away the monsters!]

[Please, if we take too long my village will be annihilated]

[Shut up, try the others! Can't you see that I'm still eating?]

[Why... Why, won't you help? The others have also declined... there is only a little time left. Please... please save my village.]

The man bowed his head desperately, then a bearded guy stepped on him.

[If you want to lower your head, do it until it touch the floor. Show some more sincerity. You know, sincerity.]

[Pretty... pleeee... ssse]

The man's tears dropped on the floor. When the warriors saw this, they began to laugh out loud.

After getting tired of laughing, the warrior removed his leg from the man's head.

[I understand]

[Really?!]

[Yeah, but you see, if you petition a subjugation now, how long will it be admitted? One year after I think? Even so, we can march to the mountain now. But you'll have to pay us 10 gold in advance.]

[That... there is no time to borrow that much money. I only have 10 silver at the moment]

Hearing that the warrior laughed out loud once more. He then took a swig of his beer before replying.

[Then it's a no. Try another.]

[No way, for once... be a little lenient. I beg of you]

[Nope. Helping you won't give me any benefit.]

Even so, the man didn't give up. He banged his head against the floor, and asked over and over again.

Being persistence, the warriors continued to make fun of him, and that only served to irritate me more.

[Don't be so conceited, you aren't even that strong. Just shut it.]

One of the warrior grabbed the man by the collar.

[What your village will become, it's none of our problem!]

The right hand formed a fist to hit the man.

It was the power of a warrior even if the said person wasn't that strong. If the man took that punch head on, he would surely receive some nasty injury.

Ha... before he knew it, the bearded warrior's fist was already stopped by a hand.

[Oh, this level of strength is just so-so.]

[Bastard, you should've just watched from the side. You're finishe...]

I put some strength in to my fingers, and pressured the warrior's fist slowly. Soon enough, the bearded warrior was brought down to his knees.

[I understand... I understand, so please let go]

[Then eat your meal quietly. It's a bother for others.]

[I'll do so. So please, release my hand... it's breaking.]

The bearded warrior who understood the difference in our ability obediently sit back on his table, and everyone quietly continue their meal.

I turned toward the man who were asking for help.

Upon seeing me, the man fell back one step. He was unable to hide his surprised face

as he put his hand to his mouth.

Let's just say, he was a childhood friend from my hometown that I didn't even get along with.

[It's been a while. Five years has it?]

Chapter 26

Struggling Against the Past

When I said that, Seto's face turned awkward.

Then he prostrated himself in front of me, having made up his mind.

I didn't even have to compel him to do it. It was something Seto did on his own will.

[Fate, I beg you! Please lend us your power! I know it's hard to ignore the bad blood from the past, and I can't do anything about it. But, just this once...]

Seto repeatedly flung stones at me back when I left the village. He was the son of the village chief and was also 4 years older than me. He was the focus of the teenagers in the village. That day, it's as if a rainstorm had hit me. Filled with despair for not being able to do anything.

By the way, the house I lived in was burnt to ashes by the village adults.
I was exiled for the sake of village's livelihood.

And Seto who was the reason for my exile, is now begging to me. Good grief... how convenient is that?

A guy who once drove this good for nothing out of the village. He's just showing his power five years ago, and I knew it was something that must have been done. But when I see Seto now. That same power, I no longer saw it in him.

Now, Seto who was on the floor kissing my feet seemed miserable and very different from the past. Also, his head had become somewhat bald, maybe due to the stress of not being able to find a warrior willing to help the village.

[This, how should I say it... Please. Lend us your power. I'll do anything in exchange for that]

Well, I can't reject him now, so better start helping him out. It might be good to return to the village as well... I'll be able to visit my parents' grave before I go to Gallia. Besides, I could make use this occasion to feed the Gluttony skill too... and that's it. Not because I wanted to help you, young baldy.

[Alright. Let's go to the village.]

[Really?! Thank you. Then, we'll head there early morning tomorrow.]

Having said so, Seto shook his neck. To think this guy is carefree enough to wait till next morning. Is he really worried about the village at all?

[Let's go now.]

[But, it's almost sunset. It's dangerous at night. It's also cloudy today. If we travel on foot during the night, we'll be easy target for monsters.]

[Isn't it alright? I'll be saving a lot of time if the monsters are coming for us.]

Seto's face turned pale and his body tremble when I said that.

Ehh!? Did I say something weird? I'm just saying that because I thought that that would be an efficient way to hunt.

Adding to that, Greed whom I put my hand on its hilt spoke to me via <Mind Reading>.

{Well I may be biased, and I know that you have hunted a very large amount of goblins, but that's all you are good at. Remember about the fight against the kobolds.}

[I know that already.]

My experience in fighting monsters other than goblins is certainly lacking. When fighting goblins, it's even possible to yawn while hunting them. I can even proudly call myself a goblin slayer.

But, as what Greed had told me, making the weakest monster as a standard won't do. Yesterday we just unlocked his second rank form, and we hunted a lot of goblins just to confirm its capability.

Using that, it felt like hunting hundreds was nothing. Well, at least the number of goblins around the capital will be on the low side for a while.

Seto watched me in confusion, since from his point of view, I was talking to myself.

[Erm... are we really going now?]

[Yeah, I will go on without turning the light on. I can see just as well in the dark.]

[...Alright. I'll go along with Fate's plan. It doesn't matter since you are the only warrior that is willing to help.]

Warrior... is that how Seto views me as now? Well, maybe of the unemployed warrior kind. Since there were bad guys like those working for Gara, I guess it's only fitting.

At sunset, we left the merchant town Tetra. Our destination will be the village at the mountainside west from here.

Before I was driven out, there should have been around 60 people living in that village. The main agricultural product was medicinal herbs that grew only near a clear stream. So each house could earn their living.

Although they mainly produce medicinal herbs, some of them still fallen ill from time to time. There were also periods where the harvests weren't up to expectation.

Following that, it was great that my father had <Spear Mastery> skill. The village was on the area where monsters rarely appeared. But during those rare times, my father was the one who'd drive them away.

My father had that value. That's why, other villagers tolerated the existence of his good for nothing child who can only eat.

It did not last forever. My father died of illness, and what was left was the incompetent waste that was me.

I desperately tried to help cultivate herb to help the village, but it didn't go well. I had lost my father's protection, and even more so was bad at herb cultivating. I was only waiting to get kicked out of the village back then.

Well, nobody knew the significance of the <Gluttony> skill back then. That's most likely why the villagers hated me. There was even a rumour, that if I was left alone for too long, I'll bring great misfortune to the village.

Oh well... My relationship with the village wasn't exactly superb.

While reminiscing about the old days, I walked through the grassy mountain path uncaringly.

[Oi, Seto. Don't get left behind, follow through properly.]

[I'm sorry.]

Seto doesn't have <**Night Vision**> like I do, so he had some trouble following me. I don't have a hobby of holding a guy's hand, so he'll have to follow on his own. A hurried voice came from behind me.

[Hey, Fate. At the bar this morning, you were really strong. Even though you were really weak back then...]

[Is that so? I haven't eaten all that much lately, so I didn't think it was that strong. Isn't that normal?]

[Huh?]

Seto raised his voice in confusion to my reply. Even if you had that kind of face, I don't really want to tell you.

[That's not important. Hurry up.]

[Yeah. But can I ask you one thing? I don't think I want to know it after coming this far... but I want to know after all.]

[What is it?]

[Fate, do you still hate us, the villagers?]

If I returned to the village, it wouldn't be strange if it's for taking revenge. Really... coming this far, and only asking now?

Well, he did get the warrior he was searching for, so at last his mind could process other things properly. As expected, those baldness was due to stress and hard work.

We went through the dark in silent for quite a while. After a while, I sighed,

[If I say that I don't, then I'll be lying. Regardless, that was where my parents were buried. I at least want to pay a visit.]

I still hate you. But I'll keep it to myself for the sake of my parents. That's it.

A virtuous saint would preach on me to forgive others. But it's only on certain circumstances, since if the other party didn't change for the better, then it'll all be for naught.

Otherwise, I would've forgotten it forever. I've already had enough disgust toward the Burix.

That's why... I wanted to see first if after five years, the people in that village had changed or not.

Judging from how Seto begged for help at the tavern, I guess they had changed their way for the better somewhat.

After everything had been said and done, I'd still go anyways... Perhaps I couldn't just

abandon my hometown after all.

There was a nice memory there with my father. It was good even if only a little.

Within the dark road, beyond 4 more hills, the village finally came into view. I could see small lights leaking out from several houses. Apparently, the monster attacks weren't that serious yet.

[Finally we have arrived, let's meet your father--the village chief at once]

[Yes, let's go. I'm the one who brought you here. So they won't dare saying anything bad about Fate. I'll take care of everything else. That's why, about the monsters, I'll be counting on you.]

Seto bowed deeply. I realized now that this Seto is no longer the Seto I knew from five years ago.

I just hope that other villagers had also changed like he did.

Chapter 27

The Village that Remained the Same

Well... I was already used to being betrayed.

The village chief strongly rejected me even though Seto had vouched for me. The villagers surrounded me, but not to appreciate my return. Ahh, those eyes that see me with murderous intent as if I'm some kind of a monster.

Seto came between me and the villagers, trying to calm them.

[Everyone, please listen! Fate has come here to help dispatch the monsters! He doesn't mean for anything else!]

Even so, the villagers kept coming at me with hoes and axes in their hands.

Alas, the villagers saw me returning to take revenge, seeing the village was in peril. The helping dispatching the monsters might be a lie, since I could just run away with the money.

First and foremost, it's impossible for a trash who can only eat to defeat those monsters. I'm obviously lying... Dozens of villagers began badmouthing me.

It wasn't even a wealthy village before the monsters attacked. So it only served to make their heart even more grim.

The condition was actually much worse than when I was still staying here.

These people seemed to believe that with mere 10 silver, Seto would be able to bring excellent warriors. But in fact, 10 gold was the bare minimum.

Their long awaited saviour turned out to be the good-for-nothing who had been banished out years ago. So the villagers' anger was actually well justified.

And Seto having delayed off the schedule only served to stoke the flame even hotter.

[Seto, having spent that much time, what kind of result is this? You couldn't even bring one real warrior to come?!]

[Can you really become the next village chief this way?]

[We don't know when the monsters will attack next, so be more serious and bring a

real warrior! Don't you know how we've been living in fear all these time?!]

Scoldings also being directed toward Seto who were standing in between. His father, the village chief even had to apologize to the other villagers since it had boiled down to that.

[Everyone, forgive him for not delivering properly... Perhaps, he's still too young to be able to employ a warrior. It's sad to say this. Tomorrow morning, I will go to recruit a warrior myself.]

[But what if the monsters come in the meantime?! Just yesterday I think I heard monster's cries from the forest. The village may not be here anymore when the warrior arrived.]

[Indeed. But... hasn't Seto brought along a nice food for them? He's can be good as a sacrifice to buy some time.]

The village chief pointed at me. Oi oi, now you are going to treat me as mere food? I was just tagging along to visit my parent's grave, and kill monsters while I'm at it... That's it. But, unbelievably... They actually treated me this way.

Through <Mind Reading> Greed was laughing at the dumbstricken me.

{Fate, you... are just a bait in their eyes. Hahahahaha, bait, bait, bait!}

[Shut up]

But it's true if this kept up. Should I threaten the village a little, I thought so while drawing Greed from its sheath.

[Fate, wait. Bear with it for now, please.]

Seto bowed to me. Really... these people gave me more headache than when I was fighting a strong monster.

The village chief soon left, leaving the others to continue the talk. Meanwhile I was prohibited to leave the village. And Seto was appointed as a lookout to make sure that I won't escape.

[Listen, Seto. Watch him properly so this good for nothing doesn't get away. Before I returned from Tetra tomorrow, if the monsters attacked, just use him as sacrifice. Don't let him escape, and don't be a disappointment again.]

After saying that much, the village chief went back to his house. The villagers who consented also returned to their houses.

Apparently, they thought that I was still the old me. A small fry that could be caught easily. Such garbage wasn't needed, but I was good enough as a sacrifice. Especially since I had no other relatives that would bear grudges towards the villagers after I died.

For those villagers, I'm but a fly approaching fire.

The village became quiet again at night. There were only me and Seto left outside.

[Oi, Seto. This isn't what you have promised. I was supposed to hunt monsters, but by some miracle I was relegated to mere food.]

[I'm sorry... I'm really sorry.]

Seto said so while covering his face with both hands. What was left of his partially bald head flew around due to the wind. Apparently his youth was eaten away by anxiety.

I'd just give my parents' grave a visit then leave... at first that's what I thought. But... the Gluttony skill had begun to show sign of hunger.

It surely won't let me to simply leave after visiting the grave.

I sighed at the odd feeling on my right eye,

[For the time being, let's stay at my house. The lookout post is also okay. Since Fate's old home is already...]

Yes, my house was burnt when I left the village. Perhaps, what remained now is only the frames and some other leftovers.

Certainly not a place where one can sleep.

[If I'm allowed to do so. That said, are you living along?]

[I have 1 daughter. My wife was eaten by monsters at the forest and died...]

That explained why he was so desperate, he wants to protect his daughter. Somehow, I felt that his appearance overlapped with that of my deceased father's.

[There, my house is just over there. Please follow me.]

[Yeah]

Arriving at Seto's house, I found that his house was only half of the chief's, similar to

the other villager's. A family could roughly fit in it.

When he opened the door, a girl, about five years old, jumped at Seto.

[Papa, welcome home. I've been a very good child, you know]

[Really?... Good girl.]

The cute girl was also fairly sensitive to her father's trouble.

[Papa has become bald somehow, Papa... are you alright?]

[Yeah, it will regrow in time... for sure.]

[I see]

After asking about why he lost his hair, Seto's daughter stared at me in curiosity.

[Papa, who is this person?]

[About that...]

In the village's point of view, I'm nothing but a food now.

What will Seto tell to his daughter?

[This person, is called Fate, and he came here to defeat the monsters. He's a super strong guy.]

[Really!?!]

His daughter looked at me in awe. Then she gradually began to cry. Perhaps, she's reminded of her mother who was killed by the monsters.

It was dinner time when his daughter finally settled down.

In Seto's absence, she said that the village chief had given her foods. To this little girl, her grandfather and grandmother was scary, she told her father that she was always scared when eating.

[That was bad indeed. I'll be here from today onward.]

[Yay, I love you Papa!]

Looking at this sight, I told Seto what's in my mind quite frankly.

[You... have changed.]

This guy who threw dog shit and stones at me in the past. He's now a fairly good father. Seto had a sorry look upon hearing my words.

[At that time, I was but a kid. It was what father... village chief had said, so I took it at face value. After my daughter was born, I started to think a little differently... I guess, I did change.]

However, even if Seto had changed, it means nothing if the rest of the villagers didn't. This village needed to refresh their way of thinking, only then they could start over.

The meal wasn't that good. It was just grains put inside the juice of wild plants, then boiled together. It couldn't be said as fine dish. However, it did have a nostalgic taste in it. My father used to cook this food for me.

[Are you guys still eating this?]

[Aye, this village is still poor even after you have left. In body and mind.]

Unable to become rich, staying poor, made their mind deteriorate. In a way, it was good that I left this village back then.

While eating the porridge, I listened to Seto's story. Mainly about the monster's attacks.

He said that the monster had grown wings, and is able to fly. Troublesome. It was the size of goblin. Had sharp fingernails, and horns on its head. Because it attacked from the sky, it's nearly impossible to escape it.

[How many of them are there?]

[No idea. But only one has been sighted so far.]

Having heard enough, I reached out to Greed.

[What do you think?]

{Perhaps it's a gargoyle. A fairly smart monster. Only one will attack to judge the situation. Then, they will attack en masse when the time comes.}

[That's one bad monster... when do you think that time is?]

{At night. When it's cloudy and there is no moonlight, those things like pitch dark night.}

[.....Wait a minute]

Wasn't it rather cloudy today? The moon would be blocked if it is.
Also, there was also what that villager had said. Yesterday, they heard monster's cry from the forest.

Could it be...

My conversation with Greed, to others would seem like I was talking to myself. Therefore, Seto and his daughter's face had become weird and indescribable. But it's not the time to think about that, there was something more important.

After a while, the bad premonition came true.

From outside, I began hearing cries one after another.

When I thought that things had become troublesome, Greed said something funny.

{Fate, how about it? To appease the gargoyles will you be the sacrificial, bait, bait!}
[Are you kidding me? I'll go outside.]

Chapter 28

Harvesting with the Black Scythe

After advising Seto and his daughter to stay at home, I dashed outside. It was pitch dark. But thankfully I had the **<Night Vision>** skill.

When I looked up to the source of the cries up in the sky, I saw dozens of villagers had been captured by the gargoyles. They were being eaten alive.

Occasionally, some liquid fell down like rain. It was the villagers' blood. Those that had been captured could no longer be saved.

I drew the black sword Greed, intending to intercept a gargoyle that was about to swoop down from the sky. **<Appraisal>** skill quickly did its work.

-Gargoyle-Noir Lv27

Endurance: 890

Strength: 760

Magic: 1390

Spirit: 1230

Agility: 980

Ability: Flame Bullet Magic

This thing could even use fire magic. It can proof to be a problem if they stay midair. I instantly changed the sword in to bow form.

I preemptively attacked one of the Gargoyle-Noir who were chewing on a person's stomach. The magic arrow was not hindered by the dark of the night, accurately found its way penetrating between the eyes of the gargoyle.

<Gluttony skill activated>

<Durability+890, Strength+760, Magic+1390, Spirit+1230, Agility+980 will be applied to your stats>

<Flame Bullet Magic has been added to the ability list.>

Oh, I acquired my first ever magic... but it's not the time to be happy.
That gargoyle noir that had been shot fell down along with the villager's corpse right
in front of me in a wet sound. This villager... turned out to be the village chief who had
ordered to make me into a sacrifice.

The man who could give evacuation order, and the only one who the other villagers
will comply to had died. No matter what I or Seto said, they won't hear it for sure.

The other gargoyle didn't budge even if one of them was killed. On the contrary, they
were already intoxicated by the taste of human flesh, and attack only so that they could
have more.

At that moment, Greed warned me.

{Fate, rain of magic attack is incoming. Quickly change in to scythe form!}

I changed Greed into scythe form as told, and jumped to Seto's house roof in order to
protect it.

At once, the sky was set ablaze. There were at least 30 flame bullets.
Aiming at the village, they fell like meteors.

Simultaneous use of 30 fire magics by the gargoyles—burned a wide range area. Such
a frightening coordination.

Everything that was directly hit by it, burned so easily.

Not all of them landed though. I managed to block two that were about to hit Seto's
house with my black scythe.

As soon as it touched the scythe, the magic disappeared without trace.
Greed had said so himself back then, that it can cut almost anything effortlessly. It even
can cutdown an activated skill, something that it couldn't do before.

I could easily cut off the gargoyle's flame bullet, dispelling it entirely. But it's different
case with the skill's indirect effects after it has successfully hit. For instance, I couldn't
douse the burning house caused by the skill through cutting the flame with the scythe
alone.

Anyways, with this kind of ability, I felt invincible while wielding this scythe.
After all, the scythe showed remarkable advantage against magic.

When I looked around, the village was ablaze, it had become bright like daylight. From inside those burning houses, villagers rolling out on the ground trying to put out the flames on their body.

Waiting for this opportunity, the gargoyles swooped down to attack.

No more than half of the total amount of villagers had survived the attack. Even so the gargoyles still greedy for more. They are now eyeing Seto's house which was the only one untouched by the flame.

This made it easier for me to settle.

The 30 gargoyle shot flame bullets simultaneously toward Seto's house where I stood guard.

I might be able to prevent two from hitting before, but 30 at once should be impossible for me to block, or so they thought.

The flame bullets converged, racing toward me directly.

Here, I'll show them what I have gained from having repeatedly hunting goblins in the capital.

[Greed, ready? I'll use that.]

{I can do it, what I'm worried about is you... let's try it.}

I threw the black scythe toward the flock of the gargoyle, spinning it with all my might. Due to the curses on its blade, the 30 flame bullets were quickly dispelled as it blast through it. In addition, it also tore down the gargoyles standing by behind the magic.

The scythe who had finished its role returned back to me like a boomerang. This was it... the result of my repeated practice.

The 28 gargoyles who'd been torn apart fell over on the vicinity of Seto's house.

<Gluttony skill activated>

<Endurance+24920, Strength+21280, Magic+38920, Spirit+34440, Agility +27440 will be applied to your stats>

There were only 2 remaining. But, as a monster that liked to attack in a group, they took an expected action. They quickly turned tail and ran away.

[Trying to run?!]

I quickly changed the scythe into a bow, and promptly downed them with 1 shot. While hearing the stats addition from devouring the 2 Gargoyle-Noirs, I switched my bow back to scythe form.

This kind of group, there must be a leader.
And yet, I hadn't seen it till now.

{Fate, above!}
[Yeah, I know]

While spewing fireballs at me, a big black shadow came down from the sky.
<Appraisal> skill quickly determine its identity.

-Gargoyle-Neo Lv47
Endurance: 12890
Strength: 11760
Magic: 23390
Spirit: 23230
Agility: 12980
Ability: Flame Bullet Magic, Fire resistance.

Different from the little ones, it even dared to launch its fire magic at close range to defeat me.
The magic power was also stronger than the gargoyle noir. I see, the fire resistance allowed for this kind of battle tactic.

However, it's still just a monster. It fought mainly out of instinct, yet still unaware of the black scythe's power?

The gargoyle neo attempted to burn down Seto's house. It approached in terminal velocity.

At zero distance, in that moment the black scythe is swung. The gargoyle neo was split in two before it could launch another fireball.

It was split in two halves as it passed by me, and fell to ground rightafter.

<Gluttony skill activated>
<Endurance+12890, Strength+11760, Magic+23390, Spirit+23230, Agility +12980 will be applied to your stats>

<Fire Resistance has been added to the skill list>

With this I obtained my second flame-based skill. Through <**Appraisal**> I found out that **Fire Resistance** reduced the damage caused by Fire Magic by half. Too bad, since that meant it's only limited to magic damage.

Thanks to eating those gargoyles, the **Gluttony** skill had satiated. The hurting in my right eye vanished, and I felt that my condition was tip top.

Meanwhile the village itself was in miserable state. All other houses except for Seto's had been burnt down. The gargoyle's fireballs had burnt the land into charred black.

The cost of the fight was huge, the surviving villagers who managed to crawl out from the burnt houses were suffering from awful burns.

I could confirm 4 survivors from the roof where I stand. Including me, Seto, and his daughter, that's only 7 people left... it's impossible to maintain the village with only that amount of people.

Watching the still smoldering houses, I felt somewhat ashamed.

Those complex feelings from when I was a kid are burning out like those house, and what remained in me was only its ashes.

Somehow, I felt an empty hole in my chest.

While I was sitting on the roof watching the flame burns indiscriminately, Seto came out of his house. He then said when he saw me.

[Fate, what on earth is this...]

[We were attacked by a group of gargoyles. I barely able to fight while protecting this house, but I managed to fight them off. There was a wide ranged fire attack.]

I focused back to the village as I spoke. Hearing nothing else from Seto, I assumed that he was too surprised to say anything else. His daughter forgot to cry, she clung to her father's foot not wanting to be separated.

It was a bad village. But after it's gone, the pain in my chest disappeared. It was replaced by an unspeakable emptiness in my heart.

Perhaps, could I say this was me feeling nostalgic...? No idea.

But there was one thing that was clear to me. Today, I had completely lost my

hometown.

Chapter 29

The Weight of a Fist

The next morning, the clouds disappeared, and the blue sky returned. As the day got brighter, I looked at the village once more. It was completely burned down.

The few surviving villagers, they cried with their knees on the burnt ground. They'd lost everything.

And then, there was Seto's house which was left untouched, a weird spectacle among all that. Soon enough, the villagers might ask Seto about this. Why was it that only his house did not receive any damage, it was not amusing for those other villagers who suffered.

Seto would have to think his next moves from now on. As for me, I was following my schedule.

After telling Seto, I walked to the remnants of my old house.

Toward the southernmost part of the village, while smelling the burning fragrance. My house was untouched by the gargoyles' fire attack. Wild plants grew in its surroundings freely.

Passing through the courtyard, I proceeded into the interior. Here was also dominated by wild plants.

I drew the black sword from its sheath, and used it to cut down the obstructive plants. After a while of cutting and advancing, I could finally make out two small gravestones placed next to each other.

“Father, Mother... I’m home”



It had been a very long time, and since it never received direct sunlight, the gravestones were covered by moss.

Let's take care of it quick. I slid back Greed into its sheath, and bent over.

My hands slowly peeled off the moss covering my mother's gravestone
My mother, she died after giving birth to me. My father told me that she was talkative and liked to meddle with others. How true that was, I had no way of knowing.

"Yosh, it's all cleaned. Next is Father."

My father who died from disease when I was 11. Using his spear skill, my father who drove away the monsters from the village was my younger self's idol.

My father tried his hardest to contribute to the village, so that I wouldn't be bullied. He always smiled, I wondered how.

Back then, he taught me that no matter how painful it got, if you kept smiling, happiness would find you sooner or later. From that day onwards, I also tried hard to keep smiling.

However, father died of disease even with his smile. I stopped forcing myself to smile starting from then.

After five years had passed. I finally understood that those smiles were for my happiness.

Therefore, I smiled in front of my father's grave.

"Father, I'm okay. I can live with my own power now."

I also cleaned up father's gravestone, then got up.

When would I be able to visit again? It's unlikely as matter of fact.

If I could return alive from Gallia, I would definitely return here to share all the things that had happened to me with my parents. So for now, I won't say anything more.

On my way back, there was Seto standing under the big tree. Apparently, he was waiting for me.

"It seems that you have concluded your visit."

"Yeah, it's done a little while ago."

"I see..."

Seto appeared to want to say something. After waiting for a while, he bowed to me.

"Again, please accept my apology. The past... is in the past, so please forgive me."

"Yeah, your apology, I've accepted it well. But..."

I quickly drew Greed out, switching it to its bow form.

When I pulled the bowstring, a black arrow was generated through my magic.

Seto's face stiffened and became pale. Even so he stood still.

"Fate... you... could it be"

Seto was terribly upset. Uncaring, I let loose the magic arrow.

Seto shut his eyes and gritted his teeth, the magic arrow disappeared on the bushes that branched out of the big tree.

Gyaaaaaaa.

The monster's final wail was heard, a gargoyle noir fell down from the tree.

"Uaaaaaaaaaa, a monster!?"

Seto's waist gave way upon seeing the monster, he landed on ground with his butt. I managed to take down the gargoyle before it could attack Seto. If I were slower by one moment, Seto would've died.

"It seems there are still some of them out there."

Ignoring the inorganic voice in my head, I approached Seto and gave him a hand to help him stand back.

He's still dumbstruck. No response even when I asked.

"Oi, get yourself together!"

I slapped his cheeks lightly while saying so.

Seto regained his mind, and get back up again.

"I was surprised. To think that there was a gargoyle on the tree behind me... I thought Fate was going to..."

Seto didn't say anything else. No, he's unlikely going to say it.
Of course Seto thought that I was about to kill him.

Well, at that point it couldn't be helped. I did have a motive for attacking him. There was also this debt Seto felt towards me.

Somehow, a weird atmosphere fell upon us.

Seto was the first to break the standstill. I watched him as he raised himself standing up.

"Fate, I want you to hit me once. Although it's impossible to break even with only that, I can only do this much."

What to do... when I was thinking, Greed spoke to me through **[Mind Reading]**.

{Just hit it. It should be easy with your stats, fufufuu}

"Seto's head will explode... don't joke around at times like this."

But even so, I also wanted to settle things down with Seto.
Here then, allow me to reply to that intention.

"Understood. Tighten your teeth, Seto"

I struck Seto's cheek with my right fist.

The impact was rather large even after I tried to hold myself back, sending him sprawling to the tree behind him.

Was that too much... while I was thinking about that, Seto was laughing on the ground.
Did that hit rattle your head so much that you've gone crazy?

When I ran up to him, I knew I was wrong. I knew this expression all to well.
The very same smile that my father showed to me.
Laughed off everything, and moved on. At the very least, that's how I interpreted Seto's laughter.



“Is it alright?”

“Yeah, since it’s impossible to continue living in that village, it’s fine.”

I and Seto’s father and daughter pair had moved back to the merchant town Tetra. Seto had decided to leave the village. As it is, it’s impossible to maintain the village with the remaining survivors only. Moreover, he received a lot of badmouthing since only his house survived the calamity.

For Seto, it was his limit. With his father dead, he no longer had the responsibility to succeed the position.

In my view, Seto had this fresh expression in his face.

“What will you do now?”

“I think I will try to find a job here. Ah, right. Please accept this.”

Seto passed to me the 10 silver reward for the monster subjugation. I shook my head, refusing.

“I don’t need it. Keep it.”

“No, I can’t do that...”

“Then, just use it for your daughter’s needs. As you can see, I’m not really worry about money right now.”

“If you say so... but honestly, this will help me.”

He’s about to start over in Tetra. So he would need some amount of money as keepsake.

I understood the most how hard it could be living in the capital with so little money. Therefore, he needed a moderate amount of money.

After talking for a while with Seto, the time to part finally came. I had arranged for a carriage to head south. I couldn’t afford to miss it, since I don’t really want to spend another day on Tetra.

“Later, Seto”

“Yeah, until later.”

“Bye bye, big bro”

That's right. I would want to meet them again later, when I'm able. Waving my goodbye to the pair of father and daughter, I departed from Tetra soon after.

Chapter 30

Ridiculous Girl

I took a carriage from Tetra on my way to the next town.
It was such fine weather that I couldn't help but to feel sleepy.

[Oy sonny, yawning so carefreedy... can you properly escort us that way?]
[Ah, sorry]

Instead of being a passenger, this time I was the escort. It's not for free, of course: I'll be paid 3 silver for the trouble. All I needed to do was to ensure that this middle aged peddler and the cargo to arrive safely to their destination.

I could easily handle it if it's just a thief or ordinary monsters. However, if it's a leader-type monster, the peddler would have no choice but to escape and abandon the cargo.

[By the way sonny, are you truly strong? 'Cause you don't seem to be.]
[I can fight alright. At the very least, up to the level of a rookie Holy Knight.]

At that point, the peddler began to laugh. That was quite dangerous, since the horses became surprised due to the sudden pull on their reins.

[Oi oi, that's quite an exaggeration. Equal to a Holy Knight! I don't mean badly, but you shouldn't spout that out in the next town, even if it's just a joke.]

[Because once we arrive at the next town, it will be the Holy Knights' territory. Of course, if your blathering was heard by a Holy Knight, we'll definitely get beheaded for being disrespectful]

The 2 of us getting beheaded. That thought sent chill up my spine. I'll never again say anything about the Holy Knights openly.

Because this time, I planned to stay for a bit and get some rest. I wasn't able to do so back at Tetra due to the monster subjugation on my hometown.

Then Greed spoke to me through **<Mind Reading>** skill.

{Isn't that fine, since you can try your hand at fighting a Holy Knight? Afterwards, you can sleep with your tummy full. Am I right?}

[I won't be able to even sleep if I do that, all the soldiers on the town will be chasing after me]

{You need to think big, Fate. If that's the case, then you could just take over the town. That way, you can sleep well since the town is under your rule. Am I right?}

[That's YOUR idea of having a nice and good sleep, not mine...]

While hearing that crazy idea from Greed, the carriage suddenly halted.

Ee? What's the matter?

A young girl could be seen standing there, blocking the road. A dark skinned girl.

Yup, she was the Gallian I saw back at the Heart clan residence. She had an impressive white tattoo etched on her body and wielded a huge black axe that betrayed her small physique.

While keeping a cool face, she continued to block the road. Unable to endure anymore, the peddler asked,

[Hey little lady. Can you move away?]

[Nope. But, if I can tag along, I will]

[...u-understood. Then get in. You have a childlike face, but your heart definitely isn't one of a child's.]

Was this because this peddler had been travelling for years already? He easily let a Gallian girl hitch a ride on his carriage. While watching the two talk, I sent eye signal to the peddler so I would not interfere with the conversation. What's the point of me escorting if it's like this? However, it's what the client wanted, regardless of what I felt.

Well, normally I would be scared shitless if I saw her being able to lift such a huge axe one-handed. This girl, she had the kind of aura that I couldn't put my finger on, but she definitely knew her way around with the axe.

It's like she was threatening without saying a word. However, if we could solve this peacefully without fighting, it would be alright, and the peddler seemed to be okay with it. Just a matter of adding more cargo onto the load, it's that kind of situation.

The Gallian girl loaded her axe first into the the carriage.

[Heave ho]

[[Uaaa]]

The carriage lurched to one side due to the heaviness of the axe.
Panicking, the peddler protested.

[The wagon might break. Please unload it!]
[Ahh, I see. Sloth, return to your original weight]

Once the Gallian girl patted the axe, the carriage became balanced once more. Perhaps she did something that greatly reduced the axe's weight.

That's a relief. I thought the carriage was about to break.
The Gallian girl sat next to me afterward.

[We meet again]



Rather than meeting, it's more appropriate to say that you've ambushed us.
Seeing through what I thought, she said,

[My name is Myne. I thought it was about time to head to Gallia. Now, I haven't heard your name yet. Tell me?]

What the hell, I felt extremely annoyed although she said that with a soft tone...
Perhaps, Myne's eyes--those red eyes might have something to do with it.
Those eyes looked very much like when my eyes became red due to being in the state of starvation.

[You heard me, right? Tell me]

[Fate Graphite]

[...I remember now. Fate the Glutton, right?]

Eh!??? I haven't told you anything about gluttony yet.

Myne then started whispering to me so that the peddler couldn't hear her.

[I'm also an owner of a Deadly Sins skill, so naturally, I could tell. Fate's skill hasn't matured yet, so you couldn't tell]

[Is that so... then, you are?]

[I am the owner of the **[Wrath]** skill. Similar to you. Well, hasn't Greed told you about it?]

Myne tilted her head, giving Greed a glance.

Un, I hadn't heard anything. Because he won't say anything about it.

Even if I asked Greed, he won't respond. He simply feigned sleeping.

Deadly Sins skills... also the **[Wrath]** skill... Is it similar to my **[Gluttony]** skill? I wanted to know more from Myne, but the Peddler could disturb us at any moment.

Talking any further now might not be a good idea.

To me, who unbearably anxious, Myne said,

[You'll understand in the future. Because, Fate has borrowed something from me. I'll stay with you until you return it to me]

Borrowed? Could it be that time with the kobolds at the Heart clan territory? Perhaps

she considered giving up the kobolds to me as some kind of a loan.

I was basically forced into the kobold hunting, since Myne would've leveled the entire mountain otherwise. Even so, it was certainly a great deal.

However I had something else to do now.

[That's a problem. I have to go to Gallia]

[I know that. I'm heading toward the same direction, so that's fine. Then you can help me out along the way]

Although she said it that way, her eyes told me that [I have to] instead.

We were heading to the same direction, and there are things I wanted to know, so I guess it's fine.

[Fine]

[That's a relief. From now on, let's do our best]

After saying so, Myne fell asleep next to me. That was fast.

Aah, so this is what Greed meant by 'a first class warrior can rest at any given time.' If that's true, then Myne should be a first class warrior. Moreover, the owner of **[Wrath]** skill... I wonder how she fights?

From the lovely sleeping face, she didn't seem like a girl who could fight.

Seeing that our conversation was over, the peddler finally called out.

[The little lady seems to be asleep. Anyways, are you two acquaintances? If so, then just say so]

[We can't even be considered acquainted. I only met her once before, I barely know anything about her.]

[Even so, she was quite friendly to you. Tha pretty much confused me. I guess I'm already too old for this...]

The carriage proceed forward without meeting any monsters. It was too peaceful, making me think that something was bound to happen.

[Aah, we can see it now. The capital of the Holy Knights]

The outside was as solidly protected as the royal capital.

The capital Alcazar was surrounded by high white walls, as if reflecting the

characteristics of the holy knights who governed it.

Chapter 31

Good City Management

The huge wall gave me a sense of oppression. As expected, a city managed by Holy Knights would feel different from other towns.

That feeling was probably one of rejection. You could almost feel the coldness of excluding everything except for what they believe in.

The carriage entered the city through a huge gate.

[What the... is the city being closed?]

[Well, since this city is governed by the Holy Knights, a strict class system has been imposed on its people]

The peddler taught me that the classification was divided by the kind of skill a person has.

1. Holy skill... Holy Knight
2. Attack skill... Warrior
3. Production skill... craftsman, merchant, etc.
4. Other, unfavorable skills... serf

The holy knights are, of course, of the highest position, followed by the warriors that can fight monsters.

The third tier was made up of those who crafted weapons and armors for the Holy Knights and of those who sold those equipment.

Even here, it's only about people who were blessed with the skills they were born with.

People with useless skills are at the bottom. Irrelevant skills and also those that don't make sense are included in this class.

For example, let's take someone who has an enhancement skill. Even though this person has **Magic Strengthening (Small)**, if he/she doesn't have the essential magic talent, then it would be meaningless.

If you have **Physical Strengthening (Small)**, you might be able to beat down a weak monster without having to rely on a skill like **One-handed Sword Mastery**. But there

is a strict combination of skills determined by the Holy Knights that you have to have, otherwise you wouldn't be recognized as being part of the warrior class.

Deep inside, I felt thankful that I wasn't born in this city. With only the **[Glutton]** skill, I'm not even fit to become a serf and would have most likely ended up disposed of. Good-for-nothings like you will only make other citizens look bad. Aah, that reminded me of my days as the gate guard for the Burix. Similar things are done at a much larger scale in this city.

[Does the class system apply to travelers too?]

[Of course not. If it did, there wouldn't be any visitors coming here. It would be bad for the city if trade stagnated and there is no flow of people]

[Indeed... I'm relieved to hear that]

[Well, since you are a warrior, I think you could make a living if you decide to live here]

The warriors have better treatment here... However, they have to risk their life fighting monsters.

This means that they are actually mere meat shields at the mercy of the Holy Knights' beck and call. The Holy Knights created this system. Of course it's meant to be beneficial to them.

[I still have something to do, so I don't think I'll stay here for too long.]

[I see. But I must remind you, do not speak ill of the Holy Knights at all times]

[Yes, I'll keep that in mind]

The carriage was stopped by the city officials. From here, it's a business negotiation.

[Sonny, here is your pay of 3 silver. Take it.]

[Alright, see you at the border]

[Yeah. At that time, I'll be counting on you again.]

I still got the money despite not doing anything. Such was an escorting job. It doesn't mean that we had to have fought. Though I felt kind of weird for not fighting at all, perhaps because of the Glutton skill forcing me to fight monsters from time to time.

I woke Myne who was still sleeping up.

[O~i, we've arrived]

[Eh... one more minute]

[How long are you going to sleep? Wake up!]

When I'm about to wake her up forcefully, Greed suddenly spoke to me for the first time in a while.

{Stop that. Don't force her to wake up. It'll be troublesome if she gets mad.}

[Troublesome? What do you mean?]

{If she's serious, she could make this city disappear without trace. **[Wrath]** is the best among the Deadly Sins in term of explosive power. So there is no other choice but to carry her on your back. Also, don't forget to bring Sloth here as well. If you forget, it's possible that it may escape again}

What the hell, an angry Myne is that scary? How dangerous can it be that even Greed does not want it to happen?

At the very least, he finally opened his mouth.

[So, are you acquainted with Myne?]

{It was a long time ago. I am surprised that she's still alive... this tenacious woman. Either way, it's something I can't get back anymore, should just give up... }

[What do you mean?]

{Dunno, it doesn't matter to me. I don't want to get involved.}

Greed shut himself up again afterwards. I guess if I want to know more, I'll have to hear it from the person herself. And judging from the way he acted, it will be troublesome for me if I were to know.

But, it's getting late. I should start helping this girl out immediately.

Concerning the Deadly Sins skills, there must be others like me and Myne. Myne said so herself. As owners of these skills, we'll naturally be able to feel the another skill owner.

Then perhaps, this feeling I have... may be similar to what Myne felt.

Regardless, I'm heading out to Gallia. I don't know what Myne wanted from me yet, but I'll lend her my power just this once.

After that, we'll walk different paths once more.

I piggybacked Myne who was still asleep. Now that I thought about it, I couldn't activate my **Appraisal** skill on her. It's the same as when we met at the Heart Family

territory. The skill was not effective on her.

Then, is this black axe called Sloth the same kind of weapon with a mind like Greed is?
Oh, I could use <Mind Reading> to check!

{guuuwwuuuu, munyamunya... guuuuwuuuu, munyamunyamunya}

It's sleeping. This weapon is sleeping. No matter how I poked it, there was no response.

This is bad, I can't raise it. What should I do with this weapon?

I knew Greed had a nasty characteristic, but this weapon didn't lose out one bit.

Greed began to laugh through the <mind reading> skill.

{This guy is sleeping as usual. It's just that lazy.}

[Can you wake it up? I couldn't get through]

{Impossible. Only the owner can do so.}

It's a weapon with weird habit. Just like Greed... Oh right.

[Hey, now. Please tell me everything you know about weapons like you and Sloth here]
{... very well, in the old days, we were called the Deadly Sin Armaments. We are far superior than those toys called Holy Swords.}

It was stronger than a Holy Sword for sure. Back then, I was able to cut down Hado's Holy Sword fairly easily.

Moreover, as he went up in rank, Greed could assume new forms. Though it absorbed my own stats to do so, he certainly helped me immensely through the battles I have fought so far.

Sloth might have a similar power, but kept it a secret. Now that I think about it, it lurched the carriage when it was put down. Weight... hmm, it should be more than that. Well, it will show itself once Myne gets into a fight.

Meanwhile, the negotiation between the peddler and the official was over, and the carriage started to move again. Let's move out so as to not obstruct it.

With Myne on my shoulder, and the black axe as well, it was really a chore. So I just

dragged the axe by the handle and carried Myne on my back.
At this rate I won't be able to stroll around the city, so decided to find an inn first.

Just as I entered the city, I was greeted by well-maintained buildings that betray the usual portrayal of a city's suburb area. It's no exaggeration that it's comparable to that of the royal capital.

It's truly the opposite of the countryside-like Heart Family territory. This must be how it would be like if you emphasise on building a town rationally.

Going down the road, I was stopped by two guards. Did I do something wrong?

[You must be a traveler]

[Yes, I'm looking for an inn to stay.]

When I answer truthfully, the guards pointed at the opposite direction.

[There is an inn for travellers on that side of the city. Beyond this point is citizen-only area.]

What the!? To think this city imposed such a limitation for the travellers... It's too thorough.

Also, I noticed the black tattoo on the guard's neck. When I tried to ask about it,

[This is a citizen mark, to be exact, it shows that I'm a warrior class]

[Oh... does everyone in this town has similar marking according to their class?]

[Yeah, that's right. It's part of regulations. Now, then, please turn back, or I will have no choice but to put you into prison]

No thanks. I immediately headed toward the inn that I'd been directed to. The way this strict city was, was too scary.

Chapter 32

Desert of Ruin

The inn that the guard had directed me to was big enough to accommodate many travelers at once. Even from a distance, it was considerably large.

I moved forward, following the wave after wave of travellers.

[This is kinda awesome...]

All kinds of shops were established on the annexes, so people could get mostly everything they needed without having to go far. It might've been done in consideration of the limitations being put upon the travellers in this city.

Whilst still carrying the sleeping Myne on my back, a facility employee called out to me.

[Do you want to stay?]

[Yes, two people]

[Certainly. Please, this way]

Admiring the polite service, I followed after the employee. A wide staircase connected to the central area came into view.

This stairs enable us to reach the lodging area on the upper level from the central area. Looking up from down here, there are countless rooms.

[Please be careful when taking your step. Your rooms are on the third floor]

[There are a considerable amount of rooms, looking from here. How many are there?]

[This lodging area has five floors, with 500 rooms on each floor. Totaling 2500 rooms.]

2500 was too much. There was no lodging place like this even at the royal capital. The largest I've seen only has 1000 rooms at most.

[Surely you are surprised since this is your first visit. This inn is this city's pride. As you may have noticed, there are restrictions on outsiders coming into this city. For this

reason, this place is managed as the temporary lodging facility for travellers and peddlers.]

[To go this far, is it to prevent people from wandering around?]

The employee thought for a while, then nodded.

[However, you are free to do mostly anything here. You are even allowed to carry weapons around.]

[That's good to hear. I'd feel naked being disarmed]

When someone is visiting an unknown city, they may get mad if they aren't allowed to carry their weapon around.

If the sleeping Myne lost her axe, she'll definite give me a run for my money. I don't know how strong the **[Wrath]** Skill useris yet, but I couldn't imagine how it would be if she was allowed to freely rampage. I was relieved to know that we were allowed to carry weapons.

After climbing up the stairs and arriving at the front of my room, the employee told me something good.

[Customer seems to be a warrior, judging from your equipment. If so, how about going sandman hunting? The city will hand out prize money for doing so]

What a coincidence! Just when the **[Glutton]** skill began to show signs of starving.

[By all means, please tell me. I'm starting to feel hungry... no, I'm thinking about earning some money if I can.]

[It would be appreciated. Recently, the sandmen have become more active, and it's too much for the city warriors to handle. That's why we also call for the help of warriors from outside.]

I see, they are so hard pressed that they'll accept any help they can get.

I stepped inside the room while listening to the details from the employee. Afterwards, I placed Myne on the bed and the black axe upon the wall.

The room was not too wide, just a simple room with two chairs and a table as furniture. Sitting there, I learned more about the sandmen.

It is said that the sandmen reside in the desert east of this city.

Because it's the kind of monster that stays in the desert, I'd thought it should be okay to leave them be, but there are actually good reasons to subjugate them.

It is said that they dry up the surrounding greenery to expand their habitat. If they are left alone, they will continue to expand the desert steadily.

There are forests that serve as water sources and farmlands in the vicinity, and if those were to become dried up, this territory will be uninhabitable.

The way I heard it, this sandman hunt was a matter of life and death to the people of this territory. That's why once the employee saw a warrior, he will immediately recommend this job.

I accepted the job readily. The sandman is a nocturnal creature, which means I'll have to go to the desert at once.

[The sandman has a red core inside its sand body. It'll be defeated if you manage to break through and crack the core. The core will turn from red to blue when it dies. You can then exchange those cores for cash. Now then, pleased to work with you.]

The employee bowed, then left the room.

Alright then, I was thinking about going to the desert right away... but what about Myne here? She'll get angry if I go out without saying anything, but she'll also get angry if I forcefully awaken her. That's how it was.

Can't be helped. Let's just leave a written note. I'll write that I left for the desert east of the city. Afterwards, looking at the sleeping Myne's calm face... I suddenly gave in to the sudden urge.

With my pen, I drew 3 pairs of whiskers in her cheeks. Hmm, it wasn't perfect, but it suited her well.

Now, while the large cat is still sleeping, let's go to do some sandman hunting.

The black sword in my hand then spoke to me through <Mind Reading> skill.

{Fate, you are too bold. Doing something like that to Myne, if something happens later on then that's not my problem.}

[It's just a little prank, you're just over exaggerating]

It should be nighttime when I arrive at the desert. Ah right, we are still inside the Holy

Knight's territory, so fighting flashily might end up causing us some problems. So it'll be wise to conceal ourselves as best as possible.

And then, it finally reappeared. The skull mask that I hadn't used since I left the royal capital was taken out of the bag.

Entering the desert, I'll put on the skull mask, and begin hunting the sandmen grandly. Should I also wear the long black overcoat too? Moreover, if I also changed Greed's form to that of the scythe... No matter how I think about it, I'll end up looking more and more like a lich. Well, I don't really want to go that far though.

Anyways, I think it's about time for me to drop that lich act.

It's different from the double life I had back then at the royal capital. Right... I can be the skull masked warrior Mukuro this time around. That way, I won't be mistaken as a monster if I accidentally came across someone else while traversing the desert.

Other than that, I have to limit myself to exchanging up to only 10 sandman cores at a time, then it will be a perfect coverup.

Greed then spoke to me,

{That, I wonder if it'll be fine... }

[Don't make such an ominous remark while we are just starting out]

Before leaving, I didn't forget to whisper [I'll be back] to the still sleeping Myne.

When I left the room, I saw many other warriors were preparing their equipment and begin gathering at the hall. Perhaps it's the party for the Sandman hunt. The number of people kept increasing, until it topped out at 20 people. This could be considered a large-scale hunt already.

Let's be careful so as not to disturb them. I don't want anyone to obstruct me from my meals. It's been a while, so I'll hunt to my heart's content this time around.

Eh? Why am I so energetic about it all of a sudden... Having this bad feeling, I used Greed as a mirror to look at my right eye... and as I thought, it's already dyed in red. I had fallen to a semi-starving state.

[Oh well... at least I can still use my other eye]

{Fate, you indulge the **[Gluttony]** skill too much. You'll have to tolerate it a bit. That's right... in this sandman hunt, try to fight while maintaining the semi-starving state.

That way, you might learn a method to better control the Glutton skill.}

Greed, that's easy to say, but it's hard to resist this instinct-like desire that tries to take control of my body. Sometimes I even mistake it for my own will.

However, there was nothing else that I could do. If I didn't absorb even a tiny fraction of power... at that time... everything that had been me would have been swallowed instead. I understood that much.

{If you don't manage to find a way to properly handle the Glutton skill each time it gets hungry, sooner or later, you'll lose yourself and cease to be 'you'.}

Greed's words weighed heavily upon me.

Chapter 33

Overlapping Impact

I silently trailed behind the party that had gathered together back at the hall. The reason was simple. It's because I wanted to see how these 20 members actually hunted.

Pardon me for doing this, but with this black cloak and skull mask I'm wearing, they'll find me as a suspicious person. It won't be funny for me if I were to be surrounded by 20 warriors from all sides.

Even so, I really wanted to see. I wanted to observe their teamwork, how they enhanced their power through it and how they complemented for each other's weaknesses. In my case, even though I'm alone, I'm pretty sure their tactics will still benefit me.

This will also serve as the training Greed had mentioned earlier. I had to test if I could stand my ground without losing to my urge, even if there were monsters right in front of me.

This feeling was close to a dog who as been placed with bait right in front of it. Moreover, it also knew that it's not the only one who's after the bait. Under this kind of condition, I'm quite worried that the **[Gluttony]** skill would go berserk. Well, it's still in semi-starvation state so I could manage it somewhat.

The clouds started to cover the sky, and the warriors I've been following kept moving without light under the darkness of the night.

U~n, I don't think all of these 20 men had acquired a night vision skill. Then why are they doing this...

Greed then told me the reason via **<Mind Reading>**.

{I'd assume they have magic tool similar to your skull mask. The monster we are hunting is a nocturnal type. Magic tools that allow them to see in the dark is a must in order to able to hunt properly. Since it was mass-produced in Gallia, magic tools with a night vision skill should be sold in markets around the world. However, since the creation method is lost now, it's a luxury item that not everyone can buy.}

[I see. I don't have much trouble since my number of skills keeps increasing over time, but ordinary people will have to prepare various kind of equipment. There seems to be no end to that no matter how much money one has.]

In contrast, my equipment only consisted of Black Sword Greed. The skull mask is only used when I want to conceal my identity.

[Should I also procure more equipment?]

{Hahahaha, you don't need to do such tiresome thing. You have the **[Gluttony]** skill. Your stats and skills will only keep increasing. Others can't do that so they have to rely on tools.}

According to Greed, buying equipment and tools will be redundant. I could easily solve the problem by devouring monsters with useful skills. That's about right.

But even so. It seemed fun to have various magic tools. I snorted at that thought.

{Ha, why do you even bother bringing unnecessary trash on your journey? It'll be just a nuisance. All you'll ever need is me!}

Magic tools are rubbish. Greed really wanted to stress that to me.

Well, it'll be wasteful if I were to lose Greed now that I have unlocked his second form. But if I tell him that, he'll definitely turn cocky. So I won't say it... never.

I only had this one magic tool--the skull mask. I'll definitely cherish this one. Because I intended to hide my real identity and act as the Mukuro the warrior for quite a while. Especially since I couldn't meet Roxy as Fate, so I'll have to don this mask at almost all times after I arrive in Gallia.

Once there, it'll be inevitable... but I'm going to devour a lot of monsters. I don't want her to see me as that monstrosity. If she were to reject me, I'll end up regretting this whole journey. I don't think I could fight in that circumstance. So I'll be needing the mask to conceal myself.

{Oi, Fate. You'll eventually lose sight of your own self if you keep using that mask, and that will create a gap in your heart that the **[Gluttony]** Skill can take advantage of. If you do that, just discard me!}

[I understand that, I understand of what you said... I'll be counting on you]

{Hahahaa, well said. You can prepare yourself to become a big shot}

I won't be easily muddled by that... It's because Greed has a bad habit of talking big. He said that I'd be able cut anything once I unlocked the second rank, but when I did, there's still this limitation attached to it. Well, even then it's still really strong... Then again, it's irritating having to sweet talk Greed from time to time.

While having a headache from hearing Greed's laughter, I maintained my distance and kept track of the warriors in front of me. Gradually, the scenery changed from grassland... to that of the desert.

[It seems really wide. As if the desert stretches beyond the horizon]
{This is the sandmen's work, they've been expanding the desert for a while now. If this goes on, in 1000 years this region will completely sink under the desert}

1000 years... is such a distant time. I don't think I'll even live that long to see all that to happen.

When I was still in my excitement for visiting my first desert, the warriors had started to fight.

{It has begun}
[Yeah, I can see that]

After I watched the fight for a while, I realized that this party was magic-based group. 5 magicians hurling fire magics acted as the base, decimating the sandmans. 10 acted as barricade to hold the sandman at bay. 5 of the warriors unexpectedly served to lure the sandmen and grouped them up... And so on.

Everyone played a solid role, gathering the sandmen in one place. And then, the fire magic would finish the job. From distance, it seemed like an assembly-line work that was easy to do.

There was no wasted moves as far as I could tell. Those moves were the work of warriors experienced in sandman hunting.

I was in awe while watching it, but meanwhile, Greed was yawning.

{Such a boring hunt. Doing the same thing over and over again, totally boring}
[If that so, what do you consider as a good hunt?]
{Kill all sandman by levelling the entire area, that's what I consider a good hunt}

Are you stupid... couldn't you recall the time we destroyed the valley back at Heart's territory? If I do that again, the aftermath will be troublesome.

Other than that, I had to test myself on enduring the semi-starving state.

[If I fight too fast, I'll end up satisfying **[Gluttony]** skill too. Who said that I need to endure in this state?]

{What's in the past, is in the past. Take this for example. I didn't say that you have to do that now. Come, Fate! We'll start our sandman hunting soon!}

Greed then suggested that I shouldn't do it like the way I handled the goblins back then, but instead opt to kill 1 at a time.

Fight the sandman while enduring the urge from the **[Gluttony]** Skill for a while. Kill it, then move on the next.

Now that you mentioned it... seemed like the urge coming from the **[Gluttony]** skill had become quite ridiculous.

After all, some time had passed due to me watching the group hunting, so I guess it's for me to start as well.

I stopped hiding, and walked away from the group of men.

After several sand hills, I finally encountered 1 sandman.

The **<Appraisal>** skill quickly activated.

-Sandman Lv30

Durability: 1760

Strength: 890

Magic: 1330

Spirit: 1760

Agility: 100

Ability: **Magic Strengthening (Medium)**

The power level was similar to that of a Noir Gargoyle. But it moved so slowly due to its low agility. So as long as I didn't make a big mistake, it shouldn't be able to catch me.

Okay then, how should I fight it? The magicians with the huge party back then fought it using fire magic. Perhaps it's weak to fire.

It's about time for the fire magic I had obtained from the Noir Gargoyle to see some use.

I thought the distance was still a bit too far, but let's try it anyways. I pointed my left hand toward the sandman, then quietly invoked **<Flame Bullet Magic>**.

Un, it takes time to activate a magic skill. Finished forming the flame bullet, I aimed at the sandman, then released it.

{Hahaha, Fate. You are... silly. There is nothing in there}

Not only the flame bullet I created didn't even reach the sandman, it also actually flew to another direction.

Sand flared up grandly. The sandman noticed it and began moving slowly. There's considerable space before it can get close to me.

{Pu... what was that. Are you becoming clumsy due to the effect of the **[Gluttony]** skill?}

[Laugh as you like. It's my first ever use of magic, so that's normal. Next time...]

Greed then stopped laughing and told me.

{Can't be helped. I'll assist you a little. Change me into the bow form}

As told, I changed him into the bow form and aimed to the sandman.

[This time, are you gonna shoot magic arrow as usual?]

{Not exactly. Invoke the flame bullet magic before while shooting the magic arrow.}

I pull the bow string, and the black arrow will be formed from my magic power. And usually, I shoot right after.

There was something more to add this time, according to Greed.

I tried to invoke the **<Flame Bullet Magic>** while aiming. At that moment, the black arrow began to flash red.

[This is... the arrow is infused with burning fire, isn't it?]

{How is that? With My magic bow, you can infuse the arrow with magic skill. In other words, the elements used will vary with Fate's skill repertoire }

Moreover, it was much faster than preparing a magic. A normal magician won't be able to do the same thing, but this make it possible for me to release multiple magic in a short time.

Go! The flame magic arrow flew at staggering speed, and directly hit the sandman's head.

{Feeling good?}

[Yeah, the best! It was a bull's eye]

Seeing the sandman in blaze, I decided to not use normal magic anymore. I'll just use the black bow in the future. Suited me better.

<Gluttony Skill Activated>

<Durability+1760, Strength+890, Magic+1330, Spirit+1760, Agility+100 will be added to your stats>

< Magic Strengthening (Medium) will be added to your skill>

As I devour the sandman's soul, I closed my eyes, feeling slightly filled.

Now it's time to take a break from the hunt to endure the urge. By repeating this, I wondered if it'd be possible to suppress the starvation state beyond the semi-starving level. I could only believe in Greed's words for now.

Chapter 34

The Strong Arms Which Enclose the Desert Sand

Ue... I'm tired. I laid myself on the sand and rolled around.

I wasn't physically tired, only mentally.

While enduring the hunger from **[Gluttony]** skill, I had to continue hunting for Sandmen's souls patiently.

It was like feeling really thirsty but only being able to drink a drop of water; and after a very long wait at that. Even though I'm really thirsty, I still can't drink as much water as I want in one go, that feeling of anger from that kind of predicament was what I had to endure.

I've been doing that kind of endurance hunt for hours.

[Greed, I think we must wrap up soon... I want to return to town before dawn]

{Indeed. The first time is always the hardest. It'll be troublesome if you go insane and turn berserk, so I've been considering that as well.}

Since Greed, as my supervisor, had given me permission, let's start hunting sandmen in earnest. There was still some time until daylight; should be enough time to somewhat satisfy the **[Gluttony]** skill, even if we start now.

Alright, let's go. My strength is increased because of starving state, as always. I stood up and sniffed... at this point, I could even tell the direction of surrounding monsters just by using my nose.

[Northwards, there are 3 sandmen slightly away from us]

{It's the effect of continuously maintaining the semi-starving state. I guess you have mastered it somewhat}

Well, I've somewhat gotten used to it. Only one eye turned red during the semi-starving state, so I can only make lower-leveled beings flinch. Both of my eyes will turn red if I enter the fully starving state, and at that point, I can overwhelm anyone with lower stats than I do by simply staring at them.

I wished I can do that in semi-starving state, but I simply couldn't.

I walked northwards. Ah, there they were. Three sandmen whose bodies only halfway out of the sands. I cautiously looked at my surroundings.

Perhaps because I've been hunting the sandmen too much. How many I've hunted already... I stopped thinking about it after the count exceeded 50, so I don't know the accurate number.

If one hunted too much, the situation will be reversed and the beasts will start fear one's presence. This is very embarrassing.

Starting from now, I'll hunt till the **[Gluttony]** skill is full. Don't think that running into the sand will save you from me.

At my current state, I'll have to hunt at least 30 sandmen to make even somewhat. After I'm done with these 3, I'll still have to hunt another 27 more.

I had to hunt them down before they could escape into the ground.
So let's get those 3 sandmen first.

I aimed the black bow, infusing it with magic. Then shot.
The sandman burned in a pillar of flame. The remaining two started escaping upon seeing that.

There was no way they could make it, since I had already released two arrows after them.

<Gluttony Skill Activated>

<Durability+5280, Strength+2670, Magic+3990, Spirit+5280, Agility+300 will be applied to your stats>

While hearing the inorganic voice ringing on my head, I stared at the three flame pillars. As I thought, they didn't fill me up that much. I really still have to hunt another 27...

As long as it's big enough, I'll be able to settle it with one shot. While thinking of such thing, when I climbed a sand hill, my nose caught a delicious scent. This kind of scent... I had smelled it before.

It was similar to that of the Crown-tier monster that invaded the Heart's territory.

[Greed, there is a crown tier monster around here]

{Ho, a monster with a proper level. Perfect for the main dish. In addition to a strong monster soul, you can also train to endure. Like hitting two birds with one stone! Don't be blinded by **[Gluttony]** skill's power as before, be careful!}

[Those are... unpleasant memories. Well, this time I do have some experience against sandmen]

While advancing by relying to the smell, I heard noises of intense battle.

Who is fighting?

I approached quietly, and soon discovered the battle site.

[Is that... the large party I followed before]

{This is bad. They'll be obliterated if this goes on }

The party had 6 injured people, making it impossible to escape.

Five shield bearing warriors stood at the front to block the Crown tier monster. However, those shields had cracks and were missing bits and pieces already. The blows from that Crown tier monster were too heavy.

It seemed that the damage had been reduced due to some skills, but once those shields fell, it would be the end of them.

Their fight struck me in the heart. They kept fighting without deserting the injured. If only they left behind the wounded, some will surely survive. It was a kind of battle situation that never crossed my head.

[How cool...]

{Do you envy them?}

[Dunno, shall we go, Greed?]

{Helping them?}

[Nope... to fill my stomach]

If it's me, I simply couldn't fight together with others. I was made aware of that when I saw how they fought.

The way I fought using black sword Greed and my **[Gluttony]** skill, there is no way I could blend in and work together. If I were to fight seriously, they would only get swallowed by it.

Come to think of it, Myne had the same kind of Mortal Sin skill like I did.

Running to the battle area, I aimed at the Crown-tier monster with my black bow. I had to pull the monster away from those dying shield warriors first.

Five flame arrows landed on its feet.

Simultaneously, the monster's feet burned up, causing it to lose its footing.

[—I'm going to charge in]

{Use the black sword form for close-quarters combat }

[Yeah, you don't need to tell me that]

Greed's shape turned from bow into a sword as I approached the Crown-tier monster. I could use **Appraisal** skill at this distance. So I instantly used it to check the enemy's information.

[Sand Protector]

-Sand Golem Lv60

Durability: 450000

Strength: 430000

Magic: 245000

Spirit: 265000

Agility: 115000

Ability: Dust Magic

That was something. I thought that it only looked strong due to the fact that it was seemingly made of rocks.

Its durability and strength were simply marvelous. To think those shield warriors actually endured attacks at this level of strength. Other than their skill, there must be something about the shields as well.

I'd like to ask about it after the fight, if it's possible.

I will have to first break the momentum of those 5 shield warrior, and force them to retreat.

[What the... UAAaaa]

[You... Guaaa]

[Eeeee, no way]

[What are you doing! Bastard! Damn you]

[Kyaaaaa]

Whoops, one of them... was a woman. Was I too violent? Pardon me.
Anyways, this created a gap between the large party and the sand golem.

I could hear a voice from behind me.

[You seem to be a warrior despite the weird appearance... could you be, wanting to join our fight?]

That might be the party leader. He did speak to me on behalf of them, but I shook my head in response.

[Then, for what reason...]

The real reason was quite embarrassing.

It had been decided from when I first arrived at this desert. That is to fill my empty stomach.

[For private reasons. I'll take on this monster. You people, leave this place quickly]
[No, that's not what you mean. Just say it honestly that you wanted to help us... that thing is too strong. You'd better fight with us]

Well, I could understand it. They are all companions who tried to deal with this situation. I was kinda expecting that he would say something like that.

Even so, they're being a hindrance. From what I found out from fighting the gargoyle, I'm not good at protecting large amounts of people.

I could manage if it's only a few. But the story would be different if it's 10 or 20 people. I'm not capable of doing such a skillful fight.

There were 20 people behind me. 6 of them are wounded and unable to move.
Assuming the golem has a wide ranged attack, they won't survive except for those standing directly behind me.

Whilst still facing against the golem, I looked back a little.

[I appreciate the thought, but you guys will only interfere with my fight. If you don't want to get caught up, then please leave immediately, or else, all of you can sleep forever buried in the sand.]

When I looked back at the golem for any movements, the party leader mumbled behind me.

[...I see. But, don't push yourself]

The Sand Golem began to move upon recovering from the numbness. It shook its arms and attacked me. Taking a side glance, I saw that the party had started to evacuate. With this, I could fight freely. Now then, let's wrap this up quickly.

I needed to return to the town before Myne woke up. I lowered Greed, and threw myself at the golem's chest.

Chapter 35

The Red Lightning

My first attack. The black sword caused a deep gash on its body.

The sand golem's reaction was a bit slow. The blows from its arms were a real threat, but it didn't matter if they couldn't hit. While making it flinch, I continued to carve away at its body.

Moved to its back and stabbed with the black sword. Without stopping, I followed with a horizontal slash.

Ee? What the... There was no response. I retreated some distance, feeling something was unusual.

If it was a normal monster, their movement would be dulled after receiving that kind of attack. However, the sand golem didn't show any signs of having taken damage.

[Could it be, this sand golem has a core inside its body just like those sandman?]

{So you finally noticed, after 3 attacks, you still have a long way to go}

[I think I noticed it pretty early though]

In other words, the core turned natural sand into rocks, and molded it into a humanoid form. That's why no matter how hard I attacked the outer shell, it received no damage since the attack didn't reach the core. Only an attack that directly damaged the core will knock the body down.

Where the hell was its core located? I thought of a solution immediately, but I had no power to do it myself,

[If we cut it down, it will become smaller]

{Obviously}

[Shut up]

Besides, I had other goals in mind. It was to improve my experience in a one on one duel.

Before, when I fought my first Crown monster--[The Wailing One]Assault Kobold, I

felt the difference in battle experience and thus avoided direct confrontation. Therefore, I used hit and run tactics taking the advantage of Greed's first rank form the black bow.

I guess back then, since there were people of Heart's territory on the line, I couldn't afford to lose in that battle. However, if I continued to fight like that, I wonder if I could survive till this afternoon.

{Well, you can take it easy, and use this as a practice. However, don't underestimate it... it's a Crown-tier after all}

[...Ou, you don't need to tell me that]

Apparently, Greed had the same idea. He liked to joke around. But when it came to battle, he always payed attention to his user, me, properly. Although the way he talked was still as annoying as usual...

{Then, go ahead}

I grasped the black sword, and charged in once more.

The sand golem reacted at once. It raised both of its arms to attack.

Too slow.

I cut away with the black sword and evaded its attack. Then I used that chance to hack at its arms.

As I looked at the two arms that were flailing away in the air, a thought came across my head. This was too easy, wasn't this supposedly a battle against Crown-tier monster? The ones I fought before were so much harder, this was like cutting meat and those were like crushing bones.

Either because I had enough battling experience, or because the sand golem was too passive. At that moment, while I was questioning myself, Greed warned me through **<Mind Reading>**.

{Fate, retreat as far as you can!}

The sand golem acted almost immediately. Its body expanded, then ejected countless rocks from its body in all directions at once at a blinding speed.

[Kuh]

A rock larger than my body was moving towards me at a terribly fast speed. I jumped up in the air so that I wouldn't collide with it.

I was hit by a strong shockwave, and I ended up being pushed back further than I expected.

Even after I landed, I was still rolling slowly on the ground,

[Even its whole body is weapon]

{That's why I told you to be careful}

I coughed out the blood that had been collecting inside my mouth, while watching the sand golem from a distance.

I was blown quite far away. Perhaps, if I didn't block the hit with the black sword, it might've been an injury where I won't be able to rise back anymore. That was too dangerous.

Well then. I think I understand how the sand golem fought for quite a bit. This was good training

[Let's go, that rock barrage, is our chance to aim at the core]

{Fate, use this me well}

The floating core of the sand golem was attracting countless rocks back to it. It started to reform itself.

I changed the sword into a bow, then began my approach again.

I ran across the sands whilst shooting the fire arrows. All of them were aimed at the core, but the rocks acted like a shield and blocked everything.

No matter, that wasn't the real aim. The winding sand and explosive flame hindered vision.

It was at that moment, I truly aimed at the sand golem's core.

Before its shape was completed, I had to cut its core. Greed's shape changed into the black sword once more.

However, before I could get close enough, the sand golem looked like it was about to explode its partially formed body.

[Che, again]

But since I saw that coming, now that my eyes had gotten used to it, I should be able to do something with my agility.

{Fate, charge ahead. Don't back down!}

[I know]

Rocks flying one after another, but I simply cut through or knocked down anything that came in my way.

Again, it tried to block me away from reaching the core.

Sand was kicking up from under my feet.

This was the Sand Golem's <Dust Magic> skill. It created a sandstorm, taking me along with it, trying to crush me with the rocks that floated in the air.

Greed responded immediately to the situation, giving me advice. I knew what to do...

{Fate! Scythe form}

From black sword to a scythe. The sand storm was instantly cut down in a single sweep.

The effects of the skill were dispelled. The rocks that protected the core were also falling off after accidentally being cut down by the scythe.

What remained was only the sand golem core. Even if it utilized its dust magic again, I'll simply cut it down with the scythe. It seemed like the sand golem had ran out of tricks.

And with that, I'd be able to cut the core with my scythe.

I made a huge swing when I tried to sever the core.



{Fate, quickly put an end to its life}

[Even if you say that...]

Knowing that it couldn't win, the core slipped itself to the ground and made its escape. I was dumbstruck by the escape.

However, you can't escape far. The Sand Golem had been decided as the main dish today. I've stored so much hatred that to miss it, this hatred would not be solved so easily. If I let it escape, another warriors group will eventually come across to it, and damage would surely be incurred.

Even if it's somewhat impossible, it had to be done. While thinking that I switched to the bow form.

[Greed, I'm going in. Use 10% of my total stats]

{10%? That won't be enough. We don't know where the sand golem is. Perhaps, it may even have hidden itself at the bottom of the sand. I'm going to need 20% to pierce that deep}

Unreasonable, as usual. Well, if I don't do it now the sand golem will only go further away. There is no time to hesitate.

[Understood, please do]

{In order to win, there is no need to worry about losing stats. Good attitude! Then I will take it, 20% of your stats!}

Power was drained from my body and entered the black bow. Despite the feeling of weakness, I kept grasping the bow in hand.

It turned into a much bigger, malevolent weapon.

I pulled the string and formed the arrow. Not forgetting to add fire into it.

I took aim at where the core had released itself and made a hole on the ground... then simply let go from there.

[Evaporate!]

Releasing a huge backdraft as usual when I released it, the bow shot an arrow of light that burned brightly. It pierced through the ground, through the hard rocks, all the way into the deepest part.

On its trail, that area of the desert was completely divided into 2 big valleys

And then, the bottom of the ravine turned into a sea of flame. Because it sent up a large amount of smoke, it was hard to breathe for a while.

While wondering if I managed to kill it or not, an organic voice rang on my head.

<Gluttony skill activated>

<Durability+538000, Strength+494500, Magic+311500, Spirit+353000, Agility+120000 will be applied to your stats>

<Dust Magic is added to your skill list>

Oh, not only the sand golem, all the sandmen that the arrow had passed through were also killed in the process. Lucky-!

The **Gluttony** skill was also rejoicing after eating another Crown-tier monster. It's time to show the result for today. I didn't get drowned by the shock flowing directly into my heart, I endured and endured.

[Gugu... fufu... fuu~. How's that, I didn't end up like last time, Greed!]

{You have somewhat endured it. But you are still drooling a little}

[Whoops]

Wiping my saliva, I used the black sword as a mirror to check my eyes. Both were black.

I was able to control the gluttony skill to some degree, and endured being in a semi-starving state. I think it's a considerable progress.

Because the starvation of the **Gluttony** skill only gets worse overtime, secretly... I was worried about whether I'd even reach Galia. But with this, I think I'll be able to manage somehow. I guess the light of hope had become visible.

I heard someone calling out to me. It was a member of the large party from before. Not all of them were here, but it seemed that they reorganize a new party to rescue me, then returned here.

The leader was completely dumbfounded upon seeing the newly rearranged desert before me.

[Did, did you do this... —what on earth... where is the sand golem?]

Then, as if waiting for that right timing, the core of the sand golem fell right in between me and the leader. The core was badly cracked, and the color had turned from red to blue.

[There it is, what's the matter?]

Well, what's with that? Anyways, I got to do, how did Greed put it? [Levelling the entire area] into practice.

Maintaining my cool as much as possible, I approached the core and patted it lightly.

Meanwhile, the warriors that has been assembled to help me dropped their jaw, as if they'd forgotten how to breathe.

Chapter 36

Warrior Mukuro

Err, what should I do now? I was being stared at by those warriors group. And with the desert heat still burning behind my back.

To be frank, for causing this situation alone, I could be considered as a monster already.

I was sweating cold sweat underneath my skull mask.

When I was just about to say something, the group leader unexpectedly bloomed a huge smile on his face.

“This is huge. I’ve never seen any other warrior who can do something like this. You guys are thinking the same too, right?”

Influenced by the group leader, the other warriors simply nodded.
Afterward, they began chirping all around me.

“He looks suspicious since he’s wearing that skull mask, but who cares about appearances anyways?”

“Thank you for saving me a little while ago”

“What kind of weapon is that black sword. Can you show me?”

I watched as the ridiculous situation unfolded. When I was with Roxy, all the warriors we had come across were always up to no good, so I was conditioned to be on guard around them.

In contrast, these guys actually cherish their partners, even to the point of worrying about me, charging back here without regard to the risk of dying.

The leader offered me a handshake.

“I am Baldo, the leader of this party. May I know your name?”

Because my real identity was concealed behind the skull mask, I replied with my

predetermined alias.

“It’s Mukuro. What about the injured people in you party?”

“Yeah, thanks to you their lives are in no danger. They all have successfully returned back to the city. They should recover after receiving some treatments.”

“I see...”

That’s good to hear.

Well then, what shall we do with this sand golem’s core? If I bring it back to the city, it’ll surely be converted into a large sum of money. Travelling funds will be improved by a notch. As I have to cover Myne’s travel expenses too, I could use some extra income.

I’ve already exposed myself to the crowd as Mukuro now, there was no turning back. I replaced Greed back to his sheath, and tried to lift the core. It was almost as tall as myself. And since it’s really heavy, lifting it normally will cause your feet to sink in the sand.

I could lift it without any difficulty, but it messed with my footing so bad. I would sink up to my knees on every step I took.

The surrounding warriors couldn’t stand watching me, thus offering their hands.

“Let us help you. At any rate, I won’t charge you an extra fee. Hey, guys!”

Vigorous and hoarse voices resounded throughout the desert. As soon as everyone also supported the core, the weight lessened by a lot, and I was able to free myself from the sand.

“Thanks”

“You were the one who helped us out. We can only do this much.”

From there, while cheering and shouting along the way, we headed back to the city. This was kinda nice.

We managed to reach the city lodging facility before daybreak. If I did it myself, I think I’ll still be buried knee-deep in the sand right now.

Such is teamwork.

Once we entered the lodging facility, employees came running all at once.

The core we had brought in caused a major fuss. Among those crowd, the employee responsible for handling this bowed to us and guided everyone to the cashier.

“No~, could it be... that sand golem is finally defeated, this is truly a delightful day”

Sand golem--a crown tier monster with a proper title. Long story short, it was the big boss of the monsters dwelling in the desert. Just to defeat this sand golem, it was said that this city's holy knights had fought it for years to no avail.

Because, after a while, it always escaped into the sand.

It seemed that this repetition had been ongoing for the past 100 years.

As I was told, the sand golem was really fleet footed in term of escaping. It disappeared into the sand when it's about to be defeated. Perhaps that's how it evaded the holy knights for all those hundred years.

Well on my part, if I didn't use the secret art of Greed's first form, I would've also ended up stomping my feet on the sand while shouting “Godammit”.

It was also a big fuss at the cashier. A lot of people gathered around, making a scene, and perhaps the best time to promote Mukuro the warrior. Since I had defeated the greatest enemy of this territory, people will still think of Mukuro on favorable term despite me always wearing mask. Some of them still glared at me curiously, but there is nothing to be worried about.

The cash will be delivered on later date due to the time required to prepare such a large sum.

“Pardon me. But we never expected the sand golem will be defeated by a non-holy knight... And due to that, we'll have to negotiate the reward amount with the top management. Until then, please have a good rest today”

“I understand. Then, I'll just get some sleep”

I thanked the warriors who had previously helped me.

Afterward, they decided to have some drinks at the bar.

“How about you? Taking a swig after a good fight is always nice. Besides, you can tell us how you defeated that sand golem”

The offer for a drink was tempting. But, it's impossible to tell them how I actually

defeated the sand golem. Otherwise, I'd be revealing myself as an amateur, since all I did was rely on Greed's ability.

I'm pretty sure that all the warriors here were seasoned veterans. Because I didn't want to disappoint them too much, I refused courteously.

"I see, that's too bad. We are going to hunt for sandmen for quite a long while in this city. If you need anything, just patch us through. You hear us, Mukuro!"

"Haha, later"

As for me, I headed back to my rented room at the third floor. I checked back if there was anyone following me. I checked in with my real face after all. It may be excessive, but there was no wrong in being cautious.

"Eerr, which one is my room again...?"

Because there were as many as 500 rooms in each floor, I couldn't tell exactly which one was my room. From here and all the way there, all of them look the same.

The amazed Greed hurriedly told me...

{The fourteenth room from here, that is our room}

"Greed has a surprisingly good memory"

{It's not really surprising. I'm an inorganic being. My body structure differs from that of a human.}

These inorganic beings were amazing. While having that thought, I unlocked the door and entered.

Finally some rest...

On one of the two beds, the still painted-with-cat-whisker Myne was still sleeping. It seemed that she hadn't noticed my naughty scribbling yet.

I'll have some sleep now. I'm tired. After placing Greed against the wall, I removed the skull mask.

Drowsiness immediately attacked me once I hit the bed. Terribly sleepy... Even if later Myne scribbled on my face to get back at me, I'm too sleepy to get up. My vision quickly faded to black.



What the... sound of water, I was woken up by sound of water flowing. Myne was nowhere to be found when I looked around the room while yawning.

After the sound of water finally stopped, Myne, only in undergarments, stepped out of the bathroom!?

“What the hell, why are you dressed like that!”

“It’s not embarrassing if a child like Fate sees me this way”



Your appearance looks younger than me, you know?
Nn? It's not all that visible when she's fully clothed, but her tattoo actually encompassed her breast and stomach area. And I could see it up to her back when she turned around... It's almost a full body tattoo. Only her face was not covered in it.

When our eyes met, she laughed cheerfully.

"That little mischief you did... it's quite hard to wash, ya know"

"!? That's something I did in the spur of moment... sorry"

"Originally, I considered to throw Fate outside while you are still sleeping. But then, I'd be in trouble if you are hurt. So, it's like this"

Myne, still only in her undergarments, handed me a hand mirror. I had trouble deciding where to put my eyes on.

"Look, my masterpiece. No need to thank me"

"What the!?"

What reflected on the mirror was like a primitive man's face. A connected pair of thick eyebrows, beard drawn around my mouth, attached to sideburns.

Also, a huge "Glutton" was written on my forehead... This was cruel. Even without mind reading skill, I can imagine that Greed was laughing hard there on the wall.

"I drew that cat whisker to make you cuter. And yet, you turned me into different person altogether"

"It suits you well. It suits you well really!"

Myne's red eyes told me to just suck it up.

"Fine, I get it. I was wrong. Therefore, please put on some clothes"

Although Myne didn't look to me like an adult, I couldn't help but still bothered by the view. I was at that age after all!

I quickly made my escape to the bathroom. Washing the so called masterpiece Myne had scribbled on my face. It's actually drawn fairly well, no no... it must be washed away...

As expected of the [Wrath] skill owner. This was like 10, no 20 times the amount of retribution.

I'll remember this well since I'll be travelling with Myne in the future.

Chapter 37

The Miserable Holy Knight

Somehow, I managed to wash away the scribbles on my face. Though when I looked in the mirror, I could still see traces of the huge writing on my forehead. Well, I could still hide it with my forelocks, and the skull mask complete concealed my face anyways. This would surely disappear after a few days.

Entering the shower room after that troublesome start, I decided to wash the sand scattered on my body from yesterday's battle.

There was a reason as to why I suddenly raised my voice. It's because I just realized that there was shampoo here as well. I was so absorbed in cleaning the scribbles off my face that I thought they only had solid soap ready.

Back when I was still working at the Heart family residency, there was only one bar of solid soap for the employee bathroom. Shampoo with fragrance extracted from flowers were something high class and pretty hard to come by. But there was actually one here...

Speaking of which, when Myne came close to me she smelled nice and sweet, probably because she washed her hair with this shampoo.

I took the bottle filled with shampoo into my hand. Then noticed that there was something like a paper on the bottle.

Will be considered as a purchase for 1 gold upon use.

...Oioi. So it's not free. Well of course... it's a luxury item after all.

“Shit”

Myne had already used it, so it's already considered a purchase. Even if I protested about this to Myne herself, she'd simply reply that it's to wash the scribbles off her face.

Well, everything seemed to turn for the worse after I casually drew those whiskers on Myne's cheeks. If I could return back in time, I'd prevent that from happening with all my might.

I had received retribution both physically and financially. There was no choice but to cover my losses with the reward money from the sand golem core. I assumed that it would be quite a lot. Surely it would be enough to cover the expense of this gold coin.

I'm looking forward to it. If I have a lot of money, what will I do...? Meanwhile, let's just eat this freshly baked bread. Also this soup with large amount of meat in it. I felt giddy just from thinking about it.

First thing first. Had I washed my face properly?

I scooped a little of the flower scented shampoo. How much silver will this be... Gulp. When I was still a gate guard, I'd have to save all my money for two years just to get two silver. For a (formerly) poor person like me, using this shampoo was like jumping from a very high place.

If Greed was here, he would've told me to stop the unnecessary thoughts and wash my head quickly. However, while I was still deep in thought...

"Are you not done yet, hurry up. I want to leave here soon"

Whoops, it seemed that she'd grown irritated with waiting.

This wasn't something to be rushed, since I don't know when I'd be able to feel it again. With that in mind, I washed my head. Uoooooooo, this... is good. This shampoo, was too awesome! It's really worth every single silver coin I spent for it.

When I finally got out of the bathroom all refreshed, I saw Myne had already prepared for the next trip, and now was laying on the bed.

"So slow... I got tired of waiting"

Just from being stared at by those red eyes, what is... this overwhelming sense of intimidation?

"Well, brighten up your mood a little, here, I'll give you this"

I placed the shampoo I had purchased on Myne's belly.

“Un, Fate is really nice. I’ll forgive you this time”

“I’m glad if you like it! Then, is it time to go?”

Taking Greed on my hip and the bag on my back, I was about to leave the room with Myne, but,

“Whoops, I have to put this on beforehand”

I took out the skull mask and put it on. It’s been decided that I’ll walk around the city as the warrior Mukuro already.

When Myne saw my appearance, she narrowed her eyes then smiled.

“You look manly”

“Eh, are you serious? I only put this on to conceal my identity...”

“Then, let’s go. Fate”

“One more thing! Oi, Myne! When I wear this mask, please call me as Mukuro!”

Myne ignored me and went ahead. And here I thought you considered me as a man when I put the mask on!

Listening to such an interaction, Greed laughed out loud.

{I’m glad to know that someone actually praised your appearance... Fuhahahahaha}

“Shut up”

Then why did she praise me in the first place? Good grief... this, only made me even more in doubt about whether I could really get along with Myne or not.

While I was busy worrying, Myne called me out from the first floor.

{Dokuro! Quick!}{*TL Note: Dokuro means skull*}

“It’s Mukuro, not Dokuro!”

I think she’s just playing with me. When I’m about to pay for the lodging, Myne went ahead and was about to leave the lodging. I stopped her in a haste, since there was still something left to do.

“What is it?”

“Last night, I defeated the sand golem in this area. So please wait for a bit while if

possible, since I have to claim the reward money first.”

“Sand golem!? That’s the crown tier monster that caused the desert to widen... Too bad, I was planning to beat it on our way, but you beat me to it”

So Myne actually planned to go down the desert and kill the sand golem. I wonder what she would do since it was a nocturnal creature. The very thought felt disturbing I tried to ask about it, but she wasn’t willing to give an answer.

“The exchange office is over there, here I go”

“...I’m going too”

Myne strapped the black axe onto her waist and followed suit.

She seemed quite disappointed with me getting ahead of her. Perhaps her Wrath skill would be strengthened from defeating monsters just like my skill. If that’s the case, missing one crown tier would really count as a huge loss.

Forgive me for wanting to grow stronger. Next time, I guess I’ll bring Myne along. But before that, I’ll have to grow even stronger than now.

Arriving at the exchange office, the employee actually had waited for me.

“Welcome back, Mukuro-sama. Here is the reward for defeating the sand golem”

I held my breath when the gold was being put on the table. For real... Is this really okay? These are a lot!

Thankfully I was wearing the skull mask. Otherwise, I’d definitely show an inappropriate face upon seeing the 100 gold coins.

But 100 gold was a lot of money. I don’t even know how I would spend it all.

Let’s put it inside the bag until I come up with something.

When I looked around as I stashed the gold at the bottom of my bag, I found Myne gazed at my hand so much with desire, like a beggar waiting for alms.

“Myne, were you aiming for the reward for defeating the crown tier monster ?”

“Un, that’s right. One purpose of my journey is for collecting money. My village is poor, so I went out to hunt crown tier monsters for their bounty, so I can cover the village’s expenses.”

"I see. Want half?"

"Of course!!"

I'd still give it to you, no need to get so worked out. 50 golds was more than enough for me.

When Myne received the money, she treated it like a precious item as she stashed it in her bag. Afterward, I could tell that her expression softened by a little. So it seems, she'll grow nicer on me if I help her raise some money... that's one more entry for my personal 'Myne: Instruction Manual'.

"I have received the money, shall we get going?"

We got out of the lodging facility with well-filled purse and a very pleased face.

However, someone prevented us from going.

There was a man standing in the middle, with golden full plate armor, and red coat. To be honest, he looked bad in it. Behind him were more than 50 Warriors. Their appearances were that of refined men.

Well, those are the flashiest sets of equipment I've seen so far, I think.

I activated the <Appraisal> skill

Rudolf Lanchester - lv 120

Durability: 1454000

Strength: 1698000

Magic: 1576000

Spirit: 1327000

Agility: 1495000

Ability: Holy Lance skill, Strength strengthening (Large), Magic Strengthening (Large)

Ooh! This is bad. All of his stats are more than 1 million. His appearance betrays his real prowess. This, is an actual Holy Knight.

Holy Knight Rudolf approached me, then asked with a scorn in his voice.

"Are you the warrior who has defeated the sand golem?"

"Yes, I am"

Then he looked around me with a gaze that looks like he's about to lick me in the face.

To be honest, it's disgusting.

"I see. Well, you do look quite strong. Well done, Fukuro was it?"

"It's Mukuro"

"Ah, right. Mukuro, you'll be my subordinate from now on. And let me tell you, it's not negotiable."

Apparently, the Holy Knights of this region took notice of me for successfully killing the Sand Golem that had been evading them for years. And for that they had decided to reward me by recruiting me into their ranks.

"That's a problem. I have places to go to..."

"What are you saying? It's been decided that you'll be a Holy Knight, so be reasonable and follow. Now, show me your head. I'll carve the tattoo of this city's residence."

Even on the royal capital, the Holy Knight's authority is exceptional. Even more so in this city ruled solely by them. What should I do... I hesitantly placed my palm on Greed.

These Holy Knight isn't someone who we can talk with. That eyes look down on others very much so. Perhaps, if I really become his subordinate, it'll more like being his pet.

The Holy Knight approached me, going closer by seconds.

"Come, be my subordinate. If you follow obediently, I'll make your life easier."

I really need to pull Greed out now... or so I thought,
Myne already stood in between the two of us.

"That's no good. Mukuro has prior appointment with me"

Whoops, the situation had taken a wild turn in a flash. I could tell.

If the holy knight didn't pull back here, I had a feeling that the situation will be even more ridiculous than it is already.

However, the Holy Knight knew no better, and instead ridiculed Myne.

"You immature kid should just go home, sleep quietly with your mother. Then...
Guaaaaaaaaaaaaaa"

Aaaaa... what? It all happened in a flash.

Myne had quickly drawn the black axe she had strapped on her waist. Then, hitting the Holy Knight at his belly with the black axe, sending him flying to the sky.

The Holy Knight who had more than 1 million in stats was easily flung up, breaking through the facility's roof. The momentum didn't wane at all, as it sent him over the city wall before he disappeared from view.

Did that Holy Knight die? Well, he had a very high stats. So it's unlikely that he died from that... right?

Myne then said to me with a refreshed face.

"We better leave before that Holy Knight returns here"

"Eh, yeah"

I wanted to smile wryly... but I couldn't.

The Warriors that the Holy Knight had brought along escaped whilst screaming, while the onlookers were eerily quiet... in a sense, it's like they've gone and seen what hell is all about.

I quietly added another entry to my personal 'Myne: Instruction Manual'. Never treated her like a child. This was an important point, since it may cost me my life.

Chapter 38

The Old Knight of Twilight

Several days had passed since I set out from that isolated city. By the way, I didn't get to talk with Baldo and the others again, since I left town as soon as I could.

Well, they also wandered from town to town, helping subjugating monsters here and there, so one day we'll likely to cross path once again. When that time comes, I'll gladly have some drinks and exchange stories with them.

We rode north on a swaying carriage. The carriage this time was different than the previous one where I also served as escort. I used the sand golem bounty money and directly chartered the carriage.

Might be a bit too luxurious. But it's a trip in which I unlikely will return from. At least I have to go with style..... from whom did I borrow that kind of thought? And of course, Myne who sat next to me with a refreshed face didn't have to pay. She wanted to return to her village with as much money as possible.

Whatever, it's better than having to travel alone.

I listened to the middle-aged coachman who I had paid 15 gold to drive for us.

"How long till the next city?"

"Ei, about... three days or so"

The further you were from the mainland, the sparser the cities became. In other words, the closer you got to Gallia, the harder it was for people to live. It's mostly because of the monster waves from Gallia.

The situation only got worse since the holy knights who're responsible to hold them off were absent. I could tell from how, up until this point, I still had to kill groups of monsters

The monsters overflowed into areas far from Gallia. This certainly had a serious

impact on the kingdom.

While I was deep in thought, the carriage made a stop with a loud noise at a small village.

“Achaa–, this is no good. Looks like... the left wheel is broken”

The man told me in a troubled face as he got down off the carriage. He said that it would take at least 3 days to repair it. So we decided to stay in the village while waiting.

Because Myne told me that she wanted to do something, at first I thought she was annoyed by the delay, but it seemed that I was wrong. She said that the delay didn't matter, and that she wanted to look around the village on her own. She's indeed an 'at my own pace' kind of person.

I decided to go find the village chief to ask permission to stay here for three days.

“By the way, this village is so peaceful”

{Perhaps, a strong person guards this village}

Greed told me through the **<mind reading>** skill. Perhaps it was, since I couldn't even feel a shred of presence of any monster that I had encountered up until now. This was such a peaceful village that I would confused it as one that was located far away from Gallia instead.

This was abnormal in a sense. I tilted my head as my sight fell upon some children passing.

Even with the supposedly unfriendly environment, the people of this village were calm and relaxed.

While I walked around, I took notice of an old man sitting on a big tree stump. His long gray hair was bundled behind his neck.

Let's just ask him where I can find the village chief. As I approached, the other party had spoken to me first.

“You are one of the strong presences that entered the village just now. Hmm, I sense no ill intent out of you”

The old man smiled, then offered me a handshake.

“I am Aaron Barbatos. The chief of this village. Welcome, young warrior”

He was the village chief? Then, I have to introduce myself properly.

“My name is Fate Graphite. Can I ask for a permission to stay here, while waiting for our coachman repairs our carriage?”

“Oh, I don’t mind you staying here as long as you want. But there is one condition. Would you fight this old man in a one-on-one duel?”

Aaron took out a golden sword from under the stump. That’s... a holy sword. In other word, this old man was a Holy Knight. And he’s been waiting here for us while hiding his weapon.

But Aaron himself did say that I had no bad intentions... Could it be, if it was the other way around, he’d kill me without question?

“No, I’m not strong enough to fight a Holy Knight”

“Hahahah, no need for lies. I have an appraisal skill. For a level 1, you have some abnormal stats there”

For real... It’s rare to see a knight with appraisal skill. I can hide my skill list using hiding skill, but I cannot fake my stats. He’s the kind of Holy Knight I’m really afraid to come across with.

“Then, what do you say?”

I slowly unsheathed Greed. But Aaron stuck out his left hand in front of me.

“I’ve said it so myself. You bear no ill intent, and do not actually want to fight. All I want is to test your strength, a spar if you may. What do you say?”

The old man, while waiting for my confirmation, unsheathed his holy sword. He seemed pretty motivated.

Then, I’ll just have to do it. I brandished Greed toward Aaron.

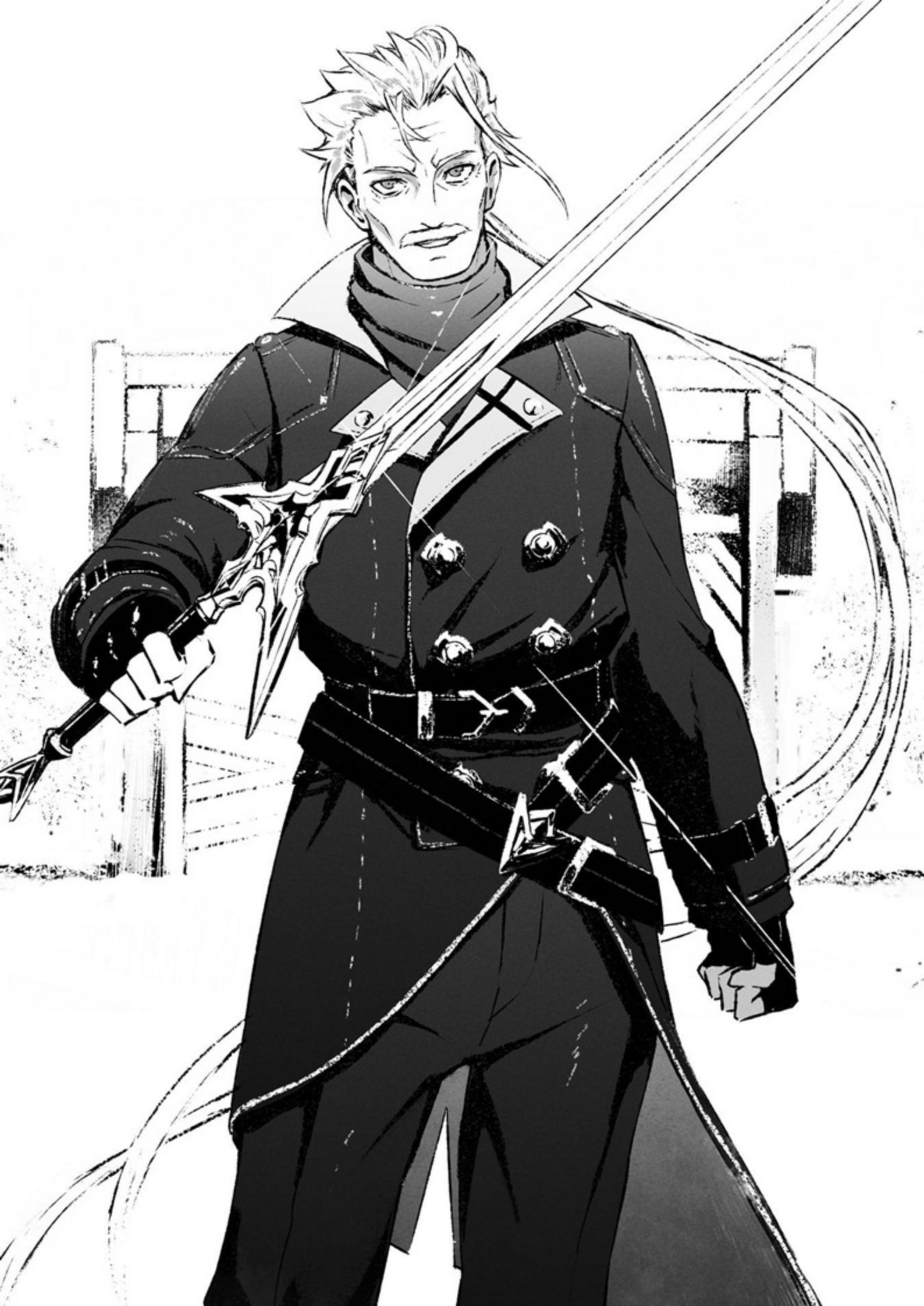
“Fumu, that stance looks like a goblin’s, or kobold’s. A wild stance.”

“Is that a compliment?”

It can’t be helped. My swordsmanship was mostly self-taught. I didn’t even know if

what I had now was proper posture or not. Either way, I could still defeat monsters. Then Aaron told me.

“Although you can defeat monsters, you’ll have trouble dealing with human opponent”



“Am I right? You’ll understand if you have the appraisal skill. But those stats are...”

“Then, what about this”

Before I knew it, Aaron’s sword tip is already inch away from my nose. Fast!

“All of those stats are over 2 million, that is pretty strong. But, it’ll be a waste if you can’t utilize it completely. It seems to me, you haven’t accustomed yourself to your rapidly rising stats”

“What’s wrong with that”

“That, as a sporting elderly figure, I will train you while you are staying in this village. How is that as the condition to stay here?”

Sporting... I don’t need to be told on how to fight. Perhaps, there was something else behind that seemingly kind smile. However, he’s right about how I had a hard time controlling my body once I reached 2 million stats.

This may prove to be an opportunity. Having an old Holy Knight teach me how to fight, it’s like dream come true. Otherwise I’d be stuck with the fighting stance taught to me by professor goblin.

“Very well. Just for a while, I’ll be in your care.”

I lowered Greed down, and slightly bowed my head to Aaron.

He in turn resheathed the golden sword, and offered me a handshake once more.

“Fumu. Me as well, Fate. Rather than die of age, I wished that I can teach everything I know to the younger generation. Who would’ve known, the perfect chance actually came knocking on my door.”

“Err... I’m glad to hear that, but I will only be here for 3 days”

“That won’t do. So let’s start the training now!”

Leaving his holy sword behind, the old man attacked me bare-handedly. I managed to catch the fist, but it was so heavy that it knocked me back. This old man was too good.

“Ho, you managed to block that despite being taken by surprise. Then, how about this?”

Aaron attacked me again, this time employing acrobatic moves. That wasn't a move that a normal aging old man could do!

Afterward, I ended up training with Aaron till sunset. Without my auto recovery skill, my body would've ended up black and blue.

"The best way to get used to your stats is by fighting barehanded. Well, that's it for today. Then, Fate, let me direct you to your lodging"

I wonder what he'll train me in tomorrow... While I was thinking about that, Myne walked relaxedly from the other side of the road. Aaron seemed to be surprised upon seeing her, although it's only temporarily.

"Could it be..."

"What's the matter?"

"No, nevermind. Is that girl your companion?"

"Yes, she is. She is Myne. Be careful not to make her angry. She's like a wild horse you shouldn't ride on."

"That is indeed troublesome, hahahaha"

"That's not a laughing matter, you know"

While the two of us were gossiping about her, Myne who was coming from the road ahead seemingly sneezed.

Then for some odd reason she glared at me. Eeee, I hope I'll be fine...

Chapter 39

Essence of Sword

Aaron guided us to his house. Since it was supposedly a Holy Knight's house, I thought that it would be a grand mansion or something along those lines, but I was sorely mistaken. It was just a plain cottage made of bricks.

[Hahahaha, I dare to bet, that you were expecting a grander house]

[To be honest, yes I did]

[Being honest is fine. But, I wonder if it's alright for the young lady here?]

At Aaron's question, Myne simply replied by shaking her head.

[Oya, she seems to be in a bad mood]

[Don't let that bother you. Myne is always like that]

[I see...]

Aaron opened the door with a slightly downcast look on his face, then invited us to enter.

It's not like Myne completely doesn't give a damn about others. When we're still travelling, I saw her actively spoke to others too. I can partially understand her as I too am the holder of similar kind of skill. Like me, Myne is a solitary warrior who only believe in her own strength. I guess she also has her own battle to fight.

After we entered Aaron's house, I realized that it was nothing more than a room. Aaron said while laughing.

[This house was built by the villagers. Originally, there was no village at all here. After seeing me slayed monsters again and again, people who had lost their home due to monster attacks, gathered together around me, and build a village. Then, it became my, the village chief, responsibility to protect the village tirelessly]

Although it seemed troublesome, I guess it wasn't that bad. It's a good way to spend time, rather than just waiting here to die.

Aaron kept talking while serving us some tea.

[I told the villagers that since I'm old already, I won't be able to protect them for too long. However, I would still linger here as long as I can since I have nowhere else to go]

[These villagers, are they planning to die alongside Aaron-sama?]

[No need for the honorifics. Simply Aaron will do. That is what has been troubling me lately. After I die, these people won't survive for long against monsters' attacking.]

Aaron couldn't do anything about it, and he had given up on trying to persuade them...

[Could it be that, you want me to replace you in guarding this village?]

[Hahaha, fanciful thought. How could I ask you, someone who only came here by chance?]

[Then, why are you training me?]

I doubt that he'll train someone unknown like me without any ulterior motives. Especially after hearing that backstory.

Aaron then looked at me with a serious face.

[It is just my selfish wish. I just wanted to leave behind my legacy through you. Can you at least fulfill this old man's wish?]

[A legacy...]

As I said that, I looked around the room, and noticed a picture on the shelf next to the bed. It was a picture of a family. The father was probably Aaron when he was younger. And next to him was a beautiful, black haired wife.

There was a boy in between the both of them, sporting a triumphant smile. A holy sword toy replica in his hand.

[That... that picture is?]

[That was my family. Back then, when I still worked for the kingdom, I often couldn't go home due to my duties. But unfortunately, they were killed during a monster invasion while I was away at Gallia. Now all I can do is wait for my day to come while looking at their picture on the bedside in remorse. It's such a laughable story]

[No, it wasn't... I'm sorry to hear that]

The boy in the picture resembled me somewhat. Perhaps, Aaron was substituting me for his son? I may have think too far... Was he trying to atone his sins and remorse by doing so?

When I looked at Aaron's gloomy expression, I guessed that it was very likely.



The next day, Myne was yawning relaxingly under the shade of a tree. That seemed nice. But I couldn't do the same.

Because there are only two days left, Aaron had been training me since early in the morning.

Guaha... I got hit three times in my gut, I'm done for.

[You cannot afford to look away.]

[Hold on, why can't we take it a little slower? We are going way too fast, I won't be able to grasp anything unless we go a little slower.]

[Ho, but the way I see it, you are managing]

Ara, did I push the wrong button? Although fighting bare-handed was the best way to control our stats, one wrong move could still cause serious injury.

According to Aaron, simulating a tense situation would improve the training quality. But well, stuffing 3 years worth of training into 3 days seemed to be a little overkill. That's why he used the practical method rather than teaching me orally.

But I suppose it really worked in a way. Since my body was forced to react without giving me a chance to think, it autonomously controlled the stats usage accordingly to meet the demands.

The training went on till the sun was above our head...

[Fumu, your form has improved a little. It's much earlier than I expected. You did good.]

[Did I? I feel like I'm about to die now]

I was able to train so feverishly thanks to auto recovery skill, but the accumulated strain was getting back to me now.

Che, at times like this. Ever since back then, I've been continuing with the practice to suppress the urge from being in starving state. But when my focus is slipping away, the urge kicked back in full force.

This familiar feeling, my right eye must've been already dyed in red. I have to cover it

up... No, I can't afford to do that when I'm up against Aaron. One eye alone won't be enough to keep up with his assault. It can't be helped...

[Nn? What is this? Strange... your eye turned red. Similar to Myne's...]

[My eye color changes when I get excited]

[But that means, Myne is perpetually excited...]

Upon hearing that, Myne started to toy around with her black axe. Did I accidentally 'excite' her in a wrong way? She's glaring at me now.

Aaaaa. I just can't lie properly at all. With a troubled look on my face, I gestured to Aaron to continue.

[Now, please continue.]

[It's good if you are motivated. Then, here I go]

This... it feels like I'm seeing Aaron's movement in advance. The semi-starving state seems to make me be even more perceptive than ever. Did it somehow synergize with the effect of the training?

[What is this, your movement has gotten a bit better]

[It's because of Aaron's teachings. Alright then, here I come]

The important thing in a fight against human is observing their footwork. I can predict their next move by looking at the movement of lower body. This is something that Aaron had taught me. If the step is deep, then it's an actual blow. On the contrary, if the step is shallow, then it's just a feint. My eyes were accustomed to only see the arms that are coming to attack before. But turns out that footwork is also something important to take note.

I saw that, here!

[Ooo... you got me there]

I blocked Aaron's fist, dashed in, and stopped when my punch is only inch away from his nose.

Well. that was made possible by the semi-starving state. Normally, I couldn't reach this level yet. But thanks to semi-starving state boosting my physical abilities, I was able to pull off some ridiculous move there..... with this I should be able to fight human opponent.

[When your eye turned red, your movement became sharper as if you've changed into someone else. Was that really your strength? But at the same time, I sensed that it place a burden on your heart... is it some form of training?]

[Pretty much]

Smiling a bitter smile, I became curious of Aaron's stats
The other party also used one to investigate me before. So why shouldn't I?
I activated <Appraisal>.

Aaron Barbatos Lv 180

Durability: 3244000

Strength: 3856000

Magic: 3948000

Spirit: 3874000

Agility: 4098000

Ability:

My... All of his stats are over 3 millions. He's much stronger than I am!
The ability might've been rendered invisible due to a certain skill.
Regardless, those are the stats of a top Holy knight.

While I was amazed at Aaron's stats, he threw another advice at me.

[Never attempt to use appraisal skill directly from the front. That skill causes distinct eye movement, making your opponent aware that you are trying to investigate them]
[I see...]

[Well, it's natural for you to have no idea about it. Even if you observe me carefully, you wouldn't be able to tell]

A top level warrior can even detect the usage of appraisal skill? Later on, I'll try to look at the mirror to see how my eyes move when I use appraisal skill.

Aaron then proceed to teach me another useful tip.

[There is a way to temporarily obstruct appraisal skill]
[I'd really want to know about that]

I'll be thankful to have such a technique since my stats differ exponentially if compared to normal people. I also don't want to have my informations be known during battle.

[Try it, use the appraisal skill on me]

As told, I used **<Appraisal>** skill.

Wa!? My eyes was suddenly blinded for a short while. What on earth have he done...?

[When you used the appraisal skill on me, I unleashed my magic power inside my body. With proper timing, it will disable appraisal skill and also blind the observer's eyes temporarily. Not a lot of people know about this little trick nowadays, But it still has its use. You should remember this]

[Thank you very much]

[Alright, let's go have a lunch break]

[Yes]

I learned various things. Greed did teach me how to fight, but he never told me anything about foundation and whatnots.

That's why I truly understood the importance of Aaron's training. Surely it would someday prove useful in the right situation.

Chapter 40

Joint Struggle

On the last day, Aaron decided to teach me sword techniques.

However, it was only the basics since time was limited. Stance, swinging the sword, defending, he taught me the ancestral style that had been passed down to him.

[Your stance is too wide. Bend your knees a little more and lower your posture.]

[Is it like this?]

[U~nn. Not like that]

Aaron showed me the actual stance in front of me. I thought that it's the same... Disallowing even a slightest difference, Aaron uncompromisingly taught me the finer details of the stance.

That said, I personally thought that my swordsmanship had considerably improved. Aaron himself told me that I look more like a human than a goblin now. Well, considering I've only been swinging my sword carelessly all these time, nothing's wrong with telling me that I'm no better than that of a goblin.

By learning proper swordsmanship, the sword indeed handled so much more reasonably than before.

Following Aaron's example, I tried to adjust myself to the stance once more.

[What about now?]

[Hmm, much better. Try lowering the sword a little.]

This bit was fairly hard to control. I slightly lowered the tip of my sword down.

[There. Let your body memorize this posture.]

[Yes]

Aaron returned his sword to its sheath after feeling satisfied with my progress.

[This is the end, it was only for 3 short days, but I was able to give you some guidance.]

You may not be qualified as a real swordsman yet, but I already taught you the basic. It's up to you to train it everyday after this. If you aim for the top, you'll find this experience to be useful in the future.]

[Thank you very much!]

And with that, I learned the basic of a proper style. I was exhausted because other than the period needed for sleep and eat, I poured every little time I had these past 3 days for training. Aaron who had taught me should've also felt tired. But he didn't show it when I looked at him... He's truly a Sword Saint.

He said that the king had ordained Aaron with Sword Saint title long ago. Sword Saint is a prestigious title only given to those who has made an exceptional contribution to the kingdom over the years, by making numerous military achievements and successes in monster subjugation.

However, Aaron himself insisted that he's not qualified to be given the Sword Saint title. That, most likely because he lost his irreplaceable family in exchange for that title. He truly loved them, that he still blamed himself for not being able to protect them in the end. He even came to hate his past self for unyieldingly chasing after the path of the sword.

Aaron smiled at me while wiping the sweats on his forehead.

[Well well, you will leave tomorrow morning, yes? It'll be lonely again here]

[Yes, I have something that I really have to do]

[Gallia... that place is even more terrible now. But I suppose it's useless to tell you not to go there]

I had told Aaron that I'm heading to Gallia some time ago. He was surprised, but quickly regained his composure. It made sense that a warrior should make Gallia their final goal.

The border of Gallia is overflowing with monsters, so it's the best hunting ground for warrior who seeks for large bounty. However, the risk of losing life is also high. It's the high risk but high return kind of thing.

After all, to earn more than enough money to spend for the rest of their lifetime is the wish of almost every warriors

[Fate, let me tell you one thing. If perhaps, you go to Gallia due to someone else, then stop. In that place where Tenryu dances in the sky, life is a but a fleeting object. Over

there, you can only fight to protect your own life. You should never attempt to protect others]

[Even so I...]

[Moreover, you seem to be no good at fighting while protecting others... That is all I want to tell you]

Aaron walked toward the well in order to wash away the sweats from training me. In those silence, those back looked somewhat lonely. Perhaps, he is worried that I will die in Gallia.

Although it's only for 3 days, Aaron did make me his disciple. But I understand, that it will be shameful of me if I already feel happy just from having been able to scratch on the surface of swordsmanship...

Also, at the end of the day, it's the disciple duty to follow the path of their mentor. Greed called out to me through <Mind Reading> skill.

{To meet such a rare warrior in this age... Be even stronger. That's the only way for you to thank him}

[Even if you didn't tell me, I will]



I ate my dinner together with Aaron and Myne. Myne, as usual, had a disinterested look on her face while she kept chewing the food. Is the food not good? As for me the vegetables and cookies are delicious without flaw!

[Myne, why is it that you don't seem to enjoy the food?]

[Oh, it's because I can't taste it... anything I ate tasted the same.]

[I see]

I didn't know that. Otherwise, I wouldn't have said that it was delicious every single time I ate my meals.

[Fate no need to worry. This is something I've chosen fo myself]

Perhaps it's related to her Wrath skill. But I don't want to pursue the topic. After all, this is the farewell dinner with Aaron. I'll only ruin the mood if I asked for Myne's story.

Aaron then said in admiration.

[Myne seems to be a complete warrior. Behaviour, attitude... everything are exceptionally sharp. I personally think that she has gone a long way.]

Myne turned to Aaron and spoke to him for the first time.

[Aaron has good eyes. I'll remember your name. In a thousand years or so, Aaron should be able to match me]

[Hahaha, 1000 years is it...? That's a very long time. Especially for someone as old as me.]

[That can't be helped. It's the limit of a human]

Ee!? The way she said it, it's as if she isn't a human herself. But no matter how I see it, doesn't she look just like a human girl?

That question swimming on my head, Aaron didn't seem to care about it.

Perhaps he sensed something extraordinary from Myne. But it wasn't something bad, since Aaron had somewhat accepted her presence here.

[Can I ask Myne one thing?]

[Fine]

Aaron set aside his meal on the table, and asked Myne.

[50 years ago, when a huge horde of monsters appeared east from here, I saw you with this very same appearance you have now. You still look the same as you were in that battle. Who are you really?]

[I... am a ghost that is not allowed to die. The person Aaron saw was really me. But as far as I remember, it wasn't such a big battle]

[I see, for you it wasn't really a big battle... the gap really is too wide]

Aaron looked up as he said so. As if he's reliving that battle from 50 years ago. And then he smiled.

[At this old age, to think I met with such a wonder... makes me want to live longer. My apology to interrupt the meal. Come now, eat to your heart contend. Feel free to get extra serving, hahahaha]

While leaving aside that topic, Aaron and Myne began to continue to eat silently. I simply couldn't keep up with those two...

What concerned me was that [a ghost that is not allowed to die] part. Is she an immortal, or is she simply a long-lived being? Since she is acquainted with Greed, she may have lived for a very long time.

While I was thinking about that, the Gluttony skill started to become wild. I had forcefully stayed on semi-starving state for two days straight. If this goes on, I might go into full starvation state shortly.

I've gone past the limit. I interrupted my meal, and told Aaron.

[Although the meal is good and all... I feel like, I... I want to go hunting for monster a little. Aren't there some monsters lurking at the castle on the west?]

[What's wrong? Your face looks terrible]

I told Aaron while keeping Gluttony skill a secret, saying that something is urging me to kill some monsters. He had no reason to doubt me, thus believed the story.

Apparently, when he found out that my eye had suddenly turned red, he thought that I was under some sort of a curse,

[Ho, so it put that kind of urge in your heart. It's indeed troublesome]

[I've gotten used to it a little, but I guess it wasn't really enough yet]

[And to relieve it, you want to go to that castle...]

[Yes]

After entering semi-starving state, I became aware that a very tasty smell was flowing from that fortress. Apparently there is a strong monster lurking there.

Yesterday, when I asked Aaron about it, he told me that something impure had resided there.

[There is a powerful crown tier monster over there. Most of the monsters that attack this village also originated from there.]

[I've heard about that yesterday... But I wonder why you haven't gone to cut the trouble on its root?]

Yesterday he won't tell me about this, but today Aaron is different.

After looking at the picture on the shelf, he closed his eyes for a while. Then slowly told me.

[It was, the castle where I used to live in... and my family still remained there]

Right... So the old castle belonged to Aaron. And his family had died there. But what did he mean with that last sentence?

Aaron continued on to answer my curiosity.

[The crown tier monster that lurked within the castle, was a Lich Lord titled Harbinger of Death. It can manipulate the dead at will. In other words, my wife, son... and the people of the castle, it uses them as a shield, thus rendering me unable to lay a hand on it]

Aaron looked at the picture of his family gloomily. Then, he turned toward me and stared straight at me.

[Fate coming here might be a sign. This is my last chance to break off from the past]

[I'll guide you to the old castle. I know what I have to do. Do you mind if I come along?]

[Of course not. Aaron's presence will be encouraging for me]

[I thank you for that. Now then, shall we go?]

Me and Aaron got ourselves ready.

Meanwhile, Myne is still silently eating her meal. Perhaps, she doesn't feel like coming along.

While equipping his gears, Aaron asked Myne.

[Pardon me, but I want you to protect this village from monsters while I'm away. Can you please do that?]

[Fine. In exchange for that, 5 gold]

To request for money at time like this... I was about to protest, but Aaron stopped me.

[It's considerably cheap to be able to hire a warrior of your calibre for 5 gold. The old castle had quite plenty of savings. Not to mention 5 gold, I'm willing to pay 50 gold after I successfully return]

[Ou, understood. I'll do my best]

A smile bloomed on Myne's previously expressionless face. Aaron's proposal may sounded enticing since she's raising money for her village. Getting excited, she started

to wave her axe around. That's dangerous... can you do that on outside, please?

Myne called out to me before I got out of the house.

[Don't you dare dying on that place. I still need Fate for my purpose]

[It'll be alright, I won't die until I reach Gallia]

[Good then]

Sent off by Myne, me and Aaron headed out to the old castle that was visible on the west.

Chapter 41

A Town Overrun by the Dead

Under the twilight sky, me and Aaron proceeded along the less maintained path. As the day became darker, my <Night Vision> automatically activated.

[Ho, you also have a night vision skill]

[Is it obvious?]

[I also have it too, so I can tell from the way you are moving.]

Certainly, when I looked closely, Aaron traversed over the rocks and fallen trees with ease. Anyways, it's not like I'd seen all of them, but Aaron did have a lot of skills compared to other warriors. I knew that he had appraisal, concealment, and now a Night Vision skill. Judging with how he handled his holy sword, he most likely possessed Holy Sword mastery too.

Due to his Concealment skill, I couldn't see his abilities. Such a mysterious old man.

Aaron noticed me staring and said.

[To be honest, I am rather anxious since I don't really know how many skills you have. By any chance, can you lift the Concealment and show them to me?]

[As expected, but I can't show it to Aaron just yet]

[Hmm, well said. Since we both have Concealment skill, it'll be stupid to not hide one's own skills.]

Even Aaron himself did not seem to be willing to show his skills to me. So it's only fair.

As we went further westward, the road soon changed from soil to cobblestones. Through the cover of fog, I could see the sight of a castle with town built in its surroundings.

It used to be a lively town. I could tell from the residual feelings that still lingered on the buildings.

Aaron muttered the name of town in a nostalgic tone.

[I have returned to Hausen, once again]

[Hausen...]

[Yes, I once ruled this town. Before the Lich Lord took it away from me.]

I kinda knew it already due to semi-starving state... that there was something unbearably tasty in that castle. The Gluttony skill kept urging me to go there, telling me to eat some monsters' soul.

It's like that, when it comes to the Gluttony skill, it felt like all my hard work had gone for naught.

Noticing me clutching my eye, Aaron asked in a worried tone.

[Does it hurt?]

[Yeah, but it's alright]

[Once we entered the town, please don't fight carelessly. The outer vicinity is guarded by Skeleton Knights and Skeleton Archers. It should be easy for you to handle the Skeleton Knight with the basic swordsmanship I have taught you. But you must be careful with the Skeleton Archer. They can attack beyond our range of attack. I may be able to block the attacks, but it might a little difficult for Fate]

Certainly, it'll be troublesome trying to block arrows that come from every directions. However, taking out the origin of the arrow before that happened is much easier.

[I'll handle the Skeleton Archers]

[How will you do that?]

Looking at my equipment--the black sword, Aaron narrowed his eyes. There is no way it can be used for long-ranged attack, that's what he thought, I assumed.

Rather than explaining about it, I chose to demonstrate it. I turned Greed into his bow form.

[This is how.]

[Ho, interesting weapon. So it can change its shape... what else it can turn into?]

[It can turn into a scythe]

[Beats me. This is the first time I ever see a weapon like that. Ahahaha, I'm glad to have been able to live this long. Very well, Fate will handle the skeleton archers. I'll take care of the skeleton knights blocking our way]

With our roles decided, we approached the town gate. The gate was heavily damaged,

so it's easy for us to get in.

A monster appeared before I knew it.

Just as I passed through the gate, a skeleton knight sprang up and swung its sword at me.

Also, from the top of the wall that surrounded the town, skeleton archers had already nocked their bow and aimed at the both of us

Well, let's activate **<Appraisal>** to see their capabilities.

Skeleton Knight Lv 35

Durability: 2290

Strength: 2540

Magic: 1230

Spirit: 1120

Agility: 1740

Ability(s): **Two-handed Sword Mastery, Agility Strengthening (Small)**

Skeleton Archer Lv 35

Durability: 1290

Strength: 1440

Magic: 1110

Spirit: 1230

Agility: 770

Ability(s): **Bow Mastery, Sniper**

That's actually quite good. From the Skeleton Knight, I have the **Two-Handed Sword mastery** already, but not with that **Agility Strengthening (small)**. So that would do. The skeleton archer had bow mastery and snipe skill. Let's see what they do with **<Appraisal>**.

Bow Mastery: Improve the damage of bow type weapon. Enable the use of **<Charged Shot>**.

Snipe: Double the range of bow.

That snipe skill could proof troublesome. However, it's inferior to my black bow. As long as I can see the target, then the arrow will reach it regardless of distance.

I used **<Appraisal>** skill once more to see the detail on charged shot. Apparently, it increase the penetrating force of an arrow the longer the user draw the bow.

If more than 50 skeleton archers used snipe and <Charged Shot> at the same time, there is little I can do to prevent them.

That's why I have to preemptively strike them down.

[Aaron, I'll handle the Skeleton Archers. We'll go with the original plan]

[Ah, but isn't this still a bit too far?]

[It's not an issue. I'll hit them all regardless.]

As long as they are within my line of sight... I nocked a magical arrow on the black bow, aiming at the first skeleton archer that enter my view. The arrow landed in between of what used to be the skeleton archer's eyebrows.

The skeleton archer got up as if nothing had happened.

[Hahaha, that was an excellent magic bow, but it seems that you have never fought an undead before. You'll have to do something like this]

To give an example for me, Aaron brandished his holy sword at the approaching skeleton knights.

He then infused magic power into his sword. Afterward, the ground beneath the skeleton knight turned bright with white light.

That was the technique of Holy Sword mastery <Grand Cross>.

Even so, the scale was so big that Hadō's grand cross would be nothing next to it. A huge group of over 100 skeleton knights were swept away in a single strike.

Aah, one day I'll get the skill from someone who can use it at similar scale. The more I think about it, the more eye-opening the battle gets.

[How about that? You'll need to use holy attribute to defeat an undead. Can you do it?] [I'll try!]

I won't give up just yet. We won't be able to enter the town if I don't get rid of the skeleton archers guarding the walls.

I'll follow on what Aaron had showed me. He struck with Holy attribute attack... the weakness of the undead. Then, I'll use fire attribute attack in exchange for that.

At that moment, the currently under bow form Greed quipped in with <Mind Reading> skill.

{So have you decided...? Let's try it}

[Fire attribute are flashy. And it takes time to burn things completely. I need something that is quick-acting]

I drew the black bow once more, aiming at the skeleton archer that I failed to kill early on. But this time, I infused the **< Dust Magic >** that I obtained from the Sand Golem into the arrow. The magic arrow infused with dust attribute stuck on the same spot the skeleton archer was hit previously.

What followed afterward, the skeleton was quickly petrified into a solid stone statue.

<Gluttony Skill activated>

<Durability+1290, Strength+1440, Magic+1110, Spirit+1230, Agility+770 will be applied to your stats>

<Bow mastery, Snipe will be added to your skill list>

I listened to the inorganic voice, and aimed at the next one. Aaron said with admiration.

[That, is really something. You actually infused magic spell into your magic arrow... I heard that there was an experiment about it back at the royal capital. However it was difficult to control, and caused a huge accidental discharge. That accident killed the test subject. Ever since then, infusing magic spell into magic arrow had never been attempted again. But even then you did it so easily. That is ridiculous!]

[Ahaha... it's nothing much]

It's very rare for Aaron to praise me, but all the difficult control and everything else was bypassed thanks to Greed. Greed is actually more awesome than I previously thought.

When that thought crossed my mind, Greed spoke to me with pride.

{Now you understand my greatness. Honor! Honor, and revere me! You should start calling me Greed-sama. Ha, Fate?}

[Never]

It's been quite a while since the last time Greed boasted that much, so let's leave him be. I better quickly eliminate all the skeleton archers on that wall.

Chapter 42

Teacher-Student's Power

Fuu~. I've petrified all the skeleton archers along the wall into stone statues. A large crowd of Skeleton Archers with each and every one of them facing toward us. It was somewhat a strange sight to behold.

[You did good, Fate. Come, let's go inside]

I followed Aaron through the wrecked castle gate. The inside of the city was eerily quiet.

I thought that the skeleton knight would appear out of nowhere like before, but there was nothing so far.

Aaron soon called me out due to my overt wariness.

[They won't be able to sense our presence for a while since we have decimate all of the gate guardians. But we better hurry before large amounts of skeleton knights appear to make trouble with us. With Fate here, we can go straight to the castle through the main street without having to worry about Skeleton Archers. Can I entrust this task to you once more?]

[Yeah, of course you can]

[If that so, shall we?]

[Roger]

Hausen city's size was about half of the Royal Capital. How many skeleton knights and archers could fit into such a vast place? Just thinking about that sent chills running down my spine. Even with a proper party, it will take more than a week just to clean them all up.

As Aaron said, it would be harder for us to hurry to the castle if the skeletons swarmed us like ants clustering on sugar. We had killed over 100 skeletons, incurring huge amount of aggro in the process. Merely entering their field of vision would incite them to attack us as if we had murdered their parents.

[I will go ahead at full speed. Are you ready?]

[I'll watch the surrounding buildings]

[Cut down everything that blocks our way. Then, let's go!]

Me and Aaron sprinted to the utmost limit of our stats, down the main street. Around 40 skeleton knights appeared up ahead, trying to block us out. Meanwhile, I could also hear noises of clanking bones from behind, making it clear that there were also several skeleton knights chasing after us.

The enemy was trying to flank us. Other than that, I could see skeleton archers above the marketplace along the main street. I see now. Once our movement stop, they will rain arrows upon us. Although they are only bones and no brain, they are still crafty nonetheless. Or at least more tactical than either goblins or kobolds.

Well, those tactics will only effective against normal warriors. Aaron bore the title of Sword Saint and was of the highest class among the Holy Knights. And I, am his disciple. There was no way something of this level will hinder us.

[Fate, don't get left behind. While I'm breaking through, focus on your own task. Don't even think about stopping]

Exactly what I thought. Alright then, I'll just do what I should do.

Raising the black bow, I released the petrifying arrow. They were already aiming at us, and could release their arrows at any moment. I don't think I could defeat them all by aiming at them one by one. So I simply aimed at one skeleton archer and released spraying shots.

<Gluttony Skill activated>

<Durability+12900, Strength+14400, Magic+11100, Spirit+12300, Agility+7700 will be applied to your stats>

While the inorganic voice rang in my head, I called out to Aaron.

[Aaron, before it's too late]

[Yes, leave it to me]

As Aaron sprinted, he activated **<Grand Cross>** technique from the **Holy Sword Mastery**. And then, when the holy sword begun to emit pale light, he canceled out the technique activation.

[Fate, listen. Earlier, I said that infusing magic spell attribute into magic arrow is really difficult. But there is another way to infuse attribute into weapon attack. For example, by cancelling the activation of a holy attribute technique like **Grand Cross**, it will infuse the holy attribute into my sword slashes. It's fairly easy to do, so remember it well.]

As expected from a Sword Saint. Even when taking his time to teach and give me pointers, he still continued to slash away at the incoming skeleton knights without doing any unnecessary moves.

I see. So by cancelling the art activation, the attribute will remain on the weapon, making it possible to imbue attribute effect to normal attacks? This is a very useful trick. Especially since attribute based skills require a lot of magic power.

Especially technique like <**Grand Cross**>. It was a powerful one shot of attribute attack. However the cooldown period between each use is long. Aaron's trick actually compensates for this drawback.

What left is whether I can do it too or not. What is easy for a Sword Saint like Aaron, doesn't always mean that it will also be easy for me.

That is what I can tell from the 3 days of training with him. In short, Aaron was a genius. So I understood that there was a clear margin between where he and I stood. What's particularly amazing, is that he can still attack properly with his eyes closed. And it seemed so natural when Aaron did it. He told me while giving me a serious look, that I could also do it, so I stared back seriously... and said [I don't have that kind of mind's eye].

Well, perhaps if I go into full starvation state, the physical boost will allow me to do so, but the risk was too high.

Passing the gaps of the broken through skeleton soldiers, the castle finally came into view, so we continued on.

It was said that a crown-tier Harbinger of Death Lich Lord lived there, within that towering castle. Anyways, if we kept fighting outside, there was no way that it wouldn't notice.

The skeletons kept attacking us single-mindedly. Taking a short delay, I killed one skeleton knight so that I could obtain its **Agility Strengthening (Small)** skill. With this, there is no more skill that I can obtain from the enemies around here.

Looking at the city from so far, I had the impression that everything had been kept

frozen in time at some point. It's because there wasn't much, if any, damage on the buildings. Such a large city should also house several warriors. But when I looked at the city's condition, there seemed to be not much resistance happening.

Either they were overwhelmed by something else, or by the citizen-turned-undead and they had no sufficient skill to deal with it.

I looked up toward the castle, where the Lich Lord resided.

The gate was wrecked much like the city gate. I could tell that the Lich Lord had humanlike intelligence to be reasonable enough to not cause unnecessary damages.

[Aaron, can I ask you about something?]

[What is the matter?]

[Is the Lich Lord as intelligent as a human?]

[That's one possibility. It did take over the city during my absence... Fate, all those things I have taught you, I think it will come in handy here.]

As Aaron told, not only that the Lich Lord was a Crown tier monster, it also has human-like guile. It wouldn't directly use immense power to pound me into dust, but instead the Lich Lord was the kind of crown tier monster which will use traps and psychological tactic against its opponent. It's the perfect kind of opponent for me who greatly needed more combat experience before going to Gallia.

The Gluttony skill hadn't been appeased yet. It's because the wretched skill was excited about the exquisite soul wandering about inside the castle. Quickly eat it, quickly eat it, it kept urging from within me.

This was the first time it got excited to this extent. If I relax myself even for a bit, it will most likely enter full starvation state immediately.

When Aaron and I finally passed the castle gate, the skeleton knights behind us ceased their pursuit. They stood there seemingly frustrated, but could only watch us.

Aaron noticed this and told me.

[It appears that beyond the gate is the territory of the Lich Lord. Other monsters are too afraid to get inside.]

[I see. So that's why there seems to be no skeletons inside the castle]

[The situation is different from when I here last time. Keep your guard up.]

Running through the courtyard, we scanned the surroundings for entry point into the castle.

More than anything, it was far too quiet that it's scary.

Chapter 43

Cleansing Light

Searching further, we found out that the door was wide open. What to do now... it's as if we were invited in.

[Fate, I will go alone from this point]

You want to go on like this? I couldn't wipe this uneasiness away, this bad feeling. Aaron put his hand on my shoulder and said.

[You should be able to sense it too. The Lich Lord is just beyond this door. No change to the plans, I just want you to stand back a little.]

[...understood.]

I had no other choice... did I? It wouldn't be much of a problem for me if only you asked me to come along fighting the Lich Lord.

Knowing Aaron, the memory from when he came here in the past might've resurfaced.

[Well then, let's go]

[Yes]

Is this it!?

As Aaron and I entered the castle, the previously dark rooms were suddenly lit with light.

There were a lot of people standing in the central hall, all of them smiling and waving at us.

[Impossible... this... this can't be]

Eyes wide open, Aaron lowered his holy sword. It was the same situation as in his past. He wasn't able to reach the Lich Lord because it had used his family corpses like puppets, blocking his way.

However, this time around these puppet corpses actually acted much like true living beings.

Two split out from the crowd. A handsome boy and a beautiful woman gladly greeted Aaron.

[Dear, welcome back. We've been waiting.]

Aaron's face stiffened even more. He didn't respond even if I tried to call out to him. Because what he saw was his long deceased family.

What should I do... while I was thinking about that, Greed spoke through the <Mind Reading> skill.

{This is bad... this is probably an illusion magic. It makes the undead to look much like the living}

[If that's the case, I should be able to dispel the irksome illusion with the black scythe]

I switched the Black Sword into Scythe form,

{Wait, Fate! It'll be like slashing through empty air. It's useless to cut those people down. We have to take down the Lich Lord who has activated this illusion in order to dispel it.}

I reverted my weapon back into sword form. The black scythe form could dispel a skill. But only the direct effect of the skill. It cannot interfere with the following events that happened due to the skill. Thus the situation wouldn't change even if I tried to cut down these people.

Moreover, those people were raised corpses, so it's useless to cut them up.

The reason why Aaron came here was to free his family and people from the Lich Lord's clutch. But in order to defeat it, we must not mistake the means for the end when the purpose is lost.

While seeing all these happening in front of me, I asked Greed about what really concerned me.

[What will happen if I cut down those people?]

{Right, the soul seems to be still confined within those body, so the Gluttony skill will consume it if you do. Why asking so suddenly?}

[...what I want to know is actually what will happen to the devoured souls. Will there be some salvation for them?]

Greed seemed to understand what I'm asking about. He was reluctant, but told me anyways.

{I think it's better for you to not know... so are you sure? Very well, though I suppose it'll be better if you think it as the way you did. Those souls consumed by Gluttony, will be forever locked within the skill. Struggling and suffering together inside an infinite hell. There will be no salvation for them.}

I could vaguely feel it already. But the answer was far more than what I had anticipated. Gluttony skill... truly deserving its title as Mortal Sin skill. However, it'll leave a bad taste on my conscience if I ended up accidentally involving good people.

That's why I decided to let those people be. Even though they were undeads controlled by the Lich Lord, I still didn't want to see them suffer in the eternal hell without any chance for salvation.

And the Lich Lord is currently in... the central hall is full of its delicious smell, so I can't really tell where to be exact. Probably, I was also caught under the effect of the illusion magic.

Tch... I could do nothing despite the frustration. What now... What should I do.

Meanwhile, Aaron was still being impeded by his family.

He should've been able to tell that it was all a lie. But even so, it's hard to deny when you have something that you really yearned for right in front of your eyes. If my father and mother appeared here, I would've fallen for the same trick too.

I could understand his feeling. But now,

[Aaron!]

I shook his body, trying to wake him up, and fortunately Aaron shook his head soon after. It appeared that he hadn't completely captured by the illusion magic.

[I'm alright. Just got reminded of old days for a while.]

Scratching his head, Aaron admitted that it became harder to ignore such memories as he grew older. Then, he brandished his holy sword toward his precious family.

[I apologize for only coming here after so long. Now, I'll ease your pain.]

Right then, a powerful and blinding flash of light engulfed the room. What was once before a beautiful decorated castle, now was desolated and corroded by rusts. This was how the castle should have looked like originally.

The citizens who were smiling at us before now had hatred on their face, with hoes, axes, and sickles in their hands.

Meanwhile, Aaron's wife was toting a rod, and his son held a holy sword.

[Father, you are awful. You are always working, working, and working... to the point you abandoned us when we were attacked by monsters. And now you even think to kill us all.]

[Dear, please think again! Look, we are all alive and well here. Please stop this foolishness and join us. With you a holy knight in here, we'll be even more safe and sound. Come now, join us here.]

Similarly, the citizen behind the two also started to reprimand, but were ultimately trying to seek their former lord's help.

Even so, Aaron didn't lower his holy sword.

[Fate, I am sorry... but can you leave my family and people to me?]

[Understood. I'll go find the Lich Lord. I'm pretty sure that it's lingering around here somewhere.]

[Then, let's begin]

[Roger]

Aaron sighed and ran up toward his family and people. On my part, I switched my black sword into bow form and headed to the back of the central hall after bypassing the citizens. Aaron kept scanning the area for a sign of the Lich Lord while holding down.

Noises of holy swords clashing against each other resounded throughout the hall. I could hear the voice of Aaron who was now facing away from me.

[You've become stronger. It seems you obeyed my orders, and never neglected your training]

His son did not reply, as if the only way to communicate with him was through sword.

It's necessary to end this kind of thing as soon as possible.

I pushed through the crowd, heading toward the very back of the room.

Hmm? The Gluttony skill was tingling. Beyond there, if I looked closely, I could tell that there was a distortion in that space.

[Greed! Is it over there!?]

{Yeah, most likely. The Gluttony skill is telling us to go forth, to break through! Even so, don't let your guard down, or else you might get swallowed.}

I already understood what Greed was worried about.

I jumped away to avoid the crowd, so that no one was in the way, and drew the black bow. Infusing the dust attribute to the magical arrow—and let loose the petrifying arrow.

[Please hiiiiittt!]

The magic arrow sped up into an invisible space and disappeared.

Gyaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa...

Along with the bone chilling scream, a petrified bone arm fell to the floor.

At the same time, a scythe wielding and black garbed figure, the Lich Lord itself, finally appeared.

In a haste, I activated **<Appraisal>**.

[Harbinger of Death]

Lich Lord Lv100

Durability: 3640000

Strength: 2560000

Magic: 4565000

Spirit: 4346000

Agility: 2347000

Skill(s): Illusion Magic, Magic Strengthening (Large), Spirit Strengthening (Large)

Its magic and spirit stats actually surpassed 4 million... I wonder what would happen if I managed to consume its soul? All these time I've only consumed monsters with 1 million in stats. I'd been training myself to suppress my Gluttony skill, so should I really do this? Again, I remember the lamenting cry back at the Heart territory. At that time, I consumed a high leveled soul that I'm not used to eat yet, rendering the

Gluttony skill to go wild.

Dammit, there was no time to hesitate since I've gone this far.

{Why are you hesitating now?! I assure you, you'll be fine this time. It's time for you to show the result of your trainings!}

[...yeah, I'll do it. I wouldn't know unless I try]

{Hahaha, that's the spirit. It wouldn't be interesting if it not going this way}

I couldn't afford to let it reuse Illusion Magic and disappear from view once more. With the full extend of my agility, I rushed toward the Lich Lord who was falling to the side wall.

I reverted back my weapon to black sword, and tried out the sword technique Aaron had taught me.

The Lich Lord stepped in with the huge scythe in hand. Judging from its center of gravity, it's trying to feint. If that's the case, I'll just use that feint to my benefit.

Without fail, I aimed at the Lich Lord's chest. Its size was almost twice and a half of me. By going in, it wasn't able to use its huge scythe to knock my sword away.

The Lich Lord also acknowledged this difference in body size. So it chose to have a prolonged battle by making use of its reach while considering the options available for it.

However, by doing so, its movement became rather dull.

{You are doing well, Fate}

[I can't be a noob forever, can I?]

{Well said, onward!}

Not taking my sweet time after lunging into its chest, I quickly followed up with a fast sweeping slash. As a result, the Lich Lord was caught off guard, losing his scythe wielding right arm along with most of its fighting prowess.

I managed to do that in the nick of time. Now it also lost its remaining hand.

Gyaaaaaaaaaa!

Another scream that I've gotten used to by now resounded on central hall. The scythe fell to the floor in a loud metallic clang.

But even after losing both of its arms, the Lich Lord didn't not simply give up.

It commanded the citizen crowding behind me like puppets to attack.
Chi, this monster doesn't know what duelling ethics are. Because I was forced to retaliate, several limbs went flying in the process.

I couldn't afford to kill them. Because that will make the Gluttony skill to eat their soul.
Goddammit.

I sensed that the Lich Lord saw what happened, since it seemingly laughed to ridicule my action. Now, it ordered the people to surround it like a wall.

[I can't attack those citizens]

{That's not good. So what will you do, Fate? Will you fight while disregarding those people}

[I can't. They'll fall into the infinite hell if I consumed them.]

{I see, but I advice that you shouldn't focus too much on those beautiful thoughts.}

Greed might be right. But I'm not fighting alone at the moment.

I could feel a sense of security upon hearing those footsteps.

[I'm sorry for the wait, Fate.]

Turning around to see the source of that powerful voice, I saw Aaron holding two holy swords in hand.

[Your family and other people...?]

[I cut their limbs or tendons, so that they become unable to move.]

Under the same circumstances I wouldn't be able to do the same... unfortunately.
Looking at the situation I'm currently in, Aaron's face distorted. It's because he understood that the Lich Lord had used the people as its meat wall.

[Again with this... so it's desperate.]

Aaron stabbed the holy sword he had taken from his son to the ground, and infuse magic into his original holy sword.

That's the Holy Sword Mastery technique **<Grand Cross>**.

[Aaron!?!]

[It's alright. If I finish this as quick as possible, they wouldn't struggle for too long.]

Lich Lord who had become uncomfortable with the situation, attempted to cast another illusion magic to sway Aaron. But he didn't relent.

Grand Cross was activated with the Lich Lord as the center. The white light lit the castle brightly. The controlled corpses were purified then disappearing into the light.

There was only the Lich Lord remaining. It tried to withstand Aaron's Grand Cross with its massive 4 million magic and spirit stats.

Aaron should've been able to finish it off, but I noticed that his face wasn't looking good. Observing more thoroughly, I realized that his side was bleeding.

As I thought, against that many people, there should be some repercussion in trying to only sever their limbs and tendons to disable them.

I stared at the holy sword on the floor. At that moment, Greed told me through **<Mind Reading>**.

{Once, only this once. I'll let you use that holy sword to help.}

Greed who didn't take lightly of me making use other weapons actually agreed this time.

Well, let's not waste his agreement. I pulled out the holy sword from the floor, and started to cast Grand Cross alongside Aaron.

Aaron was surprised upon seeing my action.

[Fate, what are you trying to do?]

[Helping you out.]

This would be the first time for me to use the Holy Sword Mastery technique **<Grand Cross>**. As I poured in my magic power, the Holy Sword started to glow in white light.

[Oh, that is...]

[Let's finish this.]

[Fumu, why of course.]



「俺も手伝います」

初めて使う、聖剣技アーツ《グランドクロス》。
俺が魔力を聖剣に注ぎ込むと、
剣身は白く輝き始める。

「おお、これは……」

「終わらせましょう」

「ふむ、そうだな」

俺たちはさらに力のすべてを注ぎ込むため、
同時に声を張り上げる。

「「グランドクロスっ！」」

お城は聖なる光に包まれて、
何もかも真っ白になっていく。

We raised our voice together at the same time, pouring all of our power.

[[Grand Cross!]]

The castle was once again engulfed in blinding light, turning everything pure white.

Chapter 44

New Possibilities

When the light died down, the Lich Lord finally collapsed to the rugged floor. The battle had been decided. The double Grand Cross that I and Aaron had casted was enough to break through the Lich Lord's magic resistance and caused to it fatal damage.

That's why the dead people who were bound to the Lich Lord were released once after another. Their bodies seemed to have reached their limit a long time ago, thus immediately decomposed into soil. This mean I have to be quick.

[Aaron, quick. To your family.]

[...Yes]

Aaron put on a stout look and went to his family.

His wife and son's body were laying on the floor and had begun to decompose from the lowermost part.

When Aaron arrived at their side, the two opened their eyes.

Could they be still being controlled... I prepared the black sword, just in case. But no, there is clear conscience in their eyes.

Unlike the doll they were before.

[Father...]

[Dear... I'm sorry]

Upon hearing that voices, Aaron dropped his holy sword, rushed to their side and held their hands that seemed to be about to collapse at any time.

How...? Didn't the two should've been died a very long time ago? At this question Greed replied with the <Mind Reading>.

{It can be said that their body still contained their soul. They gained temporary freedom after being released from the Lich Lord. Well, their time isn't long though.}

[I see...]

I don't know if this conclusion is the best for Aaron. It may even wound him even further. But I feel that this is what he always wanted.
So I simply stood there watching.

[Forgive me... Father. I couldn't protect the castle and the city. Taken prisoner by the Lich Lord after being killed... even wielding my sword against father.]
[That's enough. Forgive me too. I should've stayed with you more often. I'm really really sorry.]

It was his wife who then replied to Aaron.

[Dear, you didn't do anything bad. There was nothing we could do to change it. And after all, didn't you came to save us? So please, for our sake, continue to walk the path of the Sword Saint you had once believed in forever more.]
[Father, we'll be alright now...]

His family collapsed little by little. Even their hands could not be held anymore... the time was out.

Aaron shed tears, and answered to his family with a smile on his face.

[In my remaining life, I will live as to not to make you two ashamed... I, I can finally feel at ease.]

Upon that answer, the wife and son pair smiled, before finally turning completely to lump of soil.

Leaving two small balls of pale light. They fluttered in the air, floating around Aaron.

[Greed, what are those?]

{Souls, souls with lingering strong feeling sometimes can be seen by naked eyes. Those two were truly important for Aaron.}

[A final farewell for their loved one, is it...?]

{That's quite right. But however}

I understood what Greed was trying to say. The Lich Lord was still alive, even after all this time, since I didn't hear Gluttony Skill activating. It's that resilient, isn't it?

Turning back, I found it crawling on the floor trying to approach us.

[Don't you dare interrupt Aaron.]

I switched into bow form, and generate a magic arrow with my remaining magic power. I added dust attribute to the arrow, and aimed to the Lich Lord's forehead.

[You'll remain here, petrified.]

The arrow was released in a staggering speed, and hit the target. The petrification took effect almost instantly, to the point that it didn't even have any time to shriek.

<Gluttony Skill activated>

<Durability+3640000, Strength+2560000, Magic+4565000, Spirit+4346000, Agility+2347000 will be applied to your stats>

<Illusion Magic, Magic Strengthening (L), Spirit Strengthening (L) will be added to your skill list>

An terrifying stone statue of the Lich Lord was completed. Even if someone took it and tried sell it away, nobody will be willing to buy it since it looked like a cursed item. Good grief... it's still terrible even after dying.

Afterward, came the excitement of the Gluttony Skill after consuming a crown tier monster as usual. It raged throughout my whole body. The soul of the Lich Lord seemed to be very delicious, all the crown tier monster I've come across so far are no match.

[Ku... uuuu]

Greed reverted back to his sword form as I struggled to maintain my consciousness. After a while, the excitement died down, and it came to pass with me still not being consumed by it. It seemed that my training had been paid off.

I had my confidence, but it's far from perfect. Tears of blood running through my cheeks as a result of me forcibly enduring the urge.

Using the black sword as mirror, I checked my appearance as I wiped the blood on my face. Yes, one of my eyes was red before this, but now both of them were black and the feeling of hunger had also gone.

As I caught my breath and took a look at Aaron, the sphere of light finally disappearing slowly. Aaron watched them depart solemnly.

[Please go ahead and wait for me. I still have something left to do, I'll be there with you

one day]

As if reassured after hearing his words, the two souls finally faded into darkness. Only Aaron and I left in this castle. The battle we had here felt like it was never happened.

When Aaron turned to me, he opened his mouth with a troubled face.

[Pardon me, but can I ask you a favor?]

[What do you want me to do?]

[Cleaning up. Clean this place up from any monsters. I've made a promise, I will do it all over again.]

Aaron planned to rebuild this city. But first, we'll have to exterminate all the monsters dwelling around here. I guess it will take overnight... no, with the scale of this city, it will take a few days.

But I'll do it anyways. It's my master's request, so it's my obligation to fulfill it as his disciple.

[Sure. I'm still itching for more battle experiences.]

[Ho, well said. In that case, should I leave it all to you?]

[I'm alright with that. Aaron is wounded, so it's best not to force yourself.]

[Hahaha, this is nothing but a scratch.]

He's a tough old man alright. But as far as I know, there is no magic to heal wound. So I'd rather that he doesn't push himself too hard... though I can't ask about it to Aaron yet. But anyways I have auto recovery myself so I can work as hard as I want and still be fine.

[Then rest for a bit while, and join up with the cleaning afterward.]

[Nope, I will join up right now.]

[Eeeeeee!?]

He's really tough... or perhaps old age simply made him stupider. While thinking about that, Aaron raised his voice.

[What's the matter?]

[Fufufuhahahahaha... I didn't know that there is something like this]

Aaron was laughing out loud. Since I didn't understand the reason, it only managed to confuse me.

[Apparently, I still have some room left to grow. The limit has been overcome, and I actually rose a level.]

[Really...?]

[And still rising.]

When someone has reached a certain age, their level stopped rising even if they killed a lot of monsters. There was an inborn level limit for each individual, and normally it's impossible to rise beyond that limit.

However, limit breaks happened when one overcame that hurdle. According to Aaron, doing so would make someone to be stronger by ten times of their original power. He also said that there weren't many warriors who had exceeded their limit.

As Aaron himself doesn't know how it actually happened, he couldn't give me a proper explanation about it.

[If I have to say so myself, it may have been because of the opportunity to fight with Fate. Something in you must've triggered it within me.]

[Something...?]

I only had Gluttony Skill with me. Did it also influence Aaron who fought alongside me that he's able to experience limit break? It was just a guess since I haven't fought alongside anyone else but Aaron before.

Greed talked to me through **<Mind Reading>**.

{If you fought with the owner of a skill that breaks god's rule, there were some cases where you were also influenced... No matter who that person is. As long as they fought with someone who owned skills like the Mortal Sins skill. The influence can either be good or bad. But most of the time it appeared under the form of limit break.} *[TL Note: Mortal Sin = Deadly Sins]*

[You should've told me about this sooner]

{You didn't need to know about this before. But anyways, those recorded in history to have broken through their limit usually had some relation with the owner of the Mortal Sins skill. }

I was whispering with Greed at the back when Aaron finally recovered from his initial happiness for being able to experience limit break.

[Fate, what are you doing talking to yourself? Come now, let's clean up this city from the skeletons. Time to step up our game]

[In high spirits, eh?]

[It's been a while since I've been this happy. Alright, let's go then.]

Aaron went out of the castle, with chasing behind trying to tell him an impending issue.

[Aaron, there is one problem!]

[What?]

[If our return is delayed due to the skeleton hunting, Myne will surely be mad]

[Indeed... then how about this. In addition to the 50 gold I've promised, I'll add another 100 gold for the reward to protecting the village. She seems to be in need of a lot of money, so I think this would be enough to appease her.]

As expected of Aaron. He knew that Myne had this weakness when it came to money, even if they barely talked to each other. With that 100 gold, I dare bet that she'd immediately forgive us for being late. I can already imagine her expression upon receiving the money.

With that problem solved, I'll be able to fight to my heart's content. I fully demonstrated the new stats I obtained after consuming the Lich Lord's soul, getting ahead of Aaron.

[I should be the one taking the lead. Please rely on the youngster more like the old man you should be]

[I am certainly old already. However, I feel like I want to go crazy for a bit]

[In that case...]

[[Competition!]]

Aaron and I ended up competing on who killed the most monsters. If this went on, it might actually take faster than I expected. Retaking the city from the undead and starting over.

Chapter 45

Regained Honor

Hausen city was finally free of monsters. At least, in a bit...

The skeletons on the southern, eastern, and northern parts of the city were already under control. Which left us with the western area. We were in the midst of battle to retake that part.

Aaron and I had hunted over 1000 skeletons up to now, so the accumulated aggro was really high.

I had never hunted monsters continuously without breaks before this, so this could be regarded as unknown territory for me.

[Aaron, the skeletons are swarming on us like ants finding sugar.]

[Normally, doing continuously hunting like this is dangerous and should never be done. However, it's not much of a trouble with you around.]

Aaron's holy sword was infused with Holy Attribute; I could tell from how he easily hacked through 5 skeletons who were coming at him. Un, I don't think that my presence here was needed if at all... it's that kind of fight.

He was truly on fire.

Since we defeated Lich Lord, it's been a non-stop 15 hour hunting without any breaks or sleep. No, judging with how it's already twilight here, I guess it's been 18 hours? We were hunting skeletons to the point that we were no longer aware about the passage of time. If I went to sleep now, I'm pretty sure I'll have a dream about skeletons. Other than that, I'm also slightly worried that the Gluttony skill will flare up again.

[Fate, it will be over once we defeated these skeletons. Can you still go on?]

[Of course]

I switched my sword into bow, and rained down a hail of arrows. Of course, all of them were petrification magic arrows.

I feel like I'm progressing fast in terms of handling the magic bow from this fight. It's clear that the foundation that Aaron had taught me was the cause of this improvement...

In addition to that, there was someone acting as a role model fighting in front of me. I wondered myself if watching him fight could be counted as practice. Let's try imitating how Aaron did it.

While twisting, jumping, and stirring my body around, I kept releasing arrows into the air. Since I'm using Greed, all I need is to aim a little, and the arrows will correct itself and pierce the target skeleton's head.

<Gluttony Skill activated>

<Durability+1290, Strength+1440, Magic+1110, Spirit+1230, Agility+770 will be applied to your stat>

Wow, this is really useful. I realized something whilst hearing the inorganic voice.

How to fight while avoiding enemy's attack simultaneously. Up to now my brain had been processing attacking and evading attack separately, but apparently it's possible to do it at the same time. You do start to understand new things while fighting alongside Aaron.

Since this will be the last time, I'll burn Aaron's fighting style into my mind. How he launched an attack without wasted movements. To what extent he was aware of the surrounding enemies while fighting.

Whilst continue to fight my own way, I tried to imitate Aaron's style bit by bit.

After separating with Aaron, I'll have to continue developing my fighting style on my own. The way Greed is now, he's unable to show me any battle technique. And with Myne's personality, I doubt that she'll ever teach me how to be a proper warrior.

So most likely than not, Aaron is my first and last teacher.

[I've taken care of all the skeleton archers. Once we're done with the skeleton knights, it will be over.]

[Indeed... to assist me for such a long time... you have my gratitude. Thank you.]

Aaron gave me a side glance and smirk, all the while activating <Grand Cross> with his holy sword.

[Now, this is the end.]

The holy light emerged from the engraving on the ground, engulfing the remaining skeleton knights. The magical power was more than sufficient to purify the undeads. When the light finally subsided, the city became serene and soundless place. The only sources of light were the stars in the sky.

[To think it's night time already. I'm sorry for delaying your departure.]

[No, I've been learning a lot from this outing. Thank you very much!]

[Hahaha, I actually had no intention to teach you this much. But it must be destiny. I have nothing left to teach you.]

[Eeeee, isn't this too fast?!]

To my surprise, Aaron actually gave me a reminder.

[When it comes to swordsmanship, no matter how many shapes it has taken, it'll be of no use. Unless you can sublimate yourself in it, understand it. Fate took in the foundation I taught you more than I can imagine, I've showed you enough.]

[I still have much to learn... At least I know how to fight properly.]

I never thought that swordsmanship was actually something like that. Somehow, I felt like I just achieved a sudden breakthrough.

He put his hand on my head, and said with a gentle look.

[No, it's enough. Your weapon can switch its form freely. Thus, learning only swordsmanship will make you unbalanced. I want to avoid that. That's why you should

wield it as you want it. One day, I believe that you'll definitely find your very own fighting style that suits you the most.]

Right... that's very true. At the moment, Greed has unlocked three form: sword, bow, and scythe. More forms will eventually unlock in the future. That's why sticking to only 1 weapon discipline will be a wrong move.

My very own style that I have to pursue,

[Do you mean that I have to integrate all these weapons into one style?]

[That's it. I cannot teach you that of course. After all, I'm just a simple swordsman so all I know is swordsmanship.]

Aaron took off his hand from my hand after saying so.

Having met and fought alongside him, I came to understand that the path in front of me was a far one. Well, that's because Greed was such an exceptional weapon, but let's not tell him that. Because he'll just get on my nerves.

{Did you call?}

[...I didn't!]

{Really...? I felt that I was called just now}

I was surprised since Greed suddenly called out through <Mind Reading>. This guy really had a good intuition.

While I was busy with myself, Aaron put his holy sword back into its sheath and walked toward the castle.

[Now, let's retrieve the gold from the castle, and return back. It would be bad for us to delay any longer, right?]

[That's right! Myne is most likely very angry right now.]

[If that's the case, let's hurry.]

We ran through the empty boulevard. I hope that I can visit this place once more when it's crowded with people again.



Bringing along the gold from the castle's vault, we returned back to the village, to find an angry Myne as expected. Her eyes were brimming in red as if she's about to explode.

[You should've returned yesterday! What made you returned 1 day late!?]

[That... after we defeated the Lich Lord, we went ahead and kill every skeletons in the city...]

[I was the one who invited him to do it. My apology.]

[If you can't even keep your promise, what make you guys any different than kids!?]

It felt really bad since the one who told us out was someone who looked so much younger than the two of us like Myne. Aaron usual dignified face looked disheartened and exhausted. It's clear even to me that he looked like a mess at that point. Perhaps he was reflecting to himself after Myne told him off like that.

Looking at this, I had the urge to pat Aaron's back.

[Aaron, quickly take that out]

[Oh, that's right. Myne, here. My gratitude for protecting the village while I'm away.]

[Un... Oooooooh! !]

Myne received the bag full of coins in delight. It was the promised 50 gold with an additional 100 gold. This surprise had indeed successfully rendered her to forget her anger.

[We somehow made it]

[Umu, glad that helped. I'll go to sleep after the meal today. I'm actually quite exhausted.]

[Me too]

The villagers had prepared the meal it seemed, considering that I can smell a delicious scent coming from Aaron's house.

It appeared that Myne had told the villagers that Aaron went out to seal an evil being. Since they also wanted to be able to do something too, they ended up cooking the foods in preparation for our return from defeating monsters. Since we were supposed to return yesterday, Myne also mentioned that the villagers was worried because we didn't come back as planned.

All of the villagers had returned to their house since it's already late at night. We planned to tell them that Aaron had returned safely tomorrow.

[So, shall we go inside?]

I pulled Myne, who were smiling at the bag of gold in her hand, and went into the house. After eating to our heart contend, we went to sleep. Although Myne used my body as pillow, I didn't even have any energy left to even bother.

In the next morning, Aaron and the villagers sent us off in the front of the repaired carriage.

Since most of the monsters coming to attack the village came from Hausen city, by helping Aaron, my achievements toward the village could be considered pretty high since the villagers were thanking me again and again. Myne also seemed to have beaten about 30 monsters or so while we were away, so she also received appreciation from the villagers.

At that point, Aaron told me something subtle.

[Fate, listen. Once you finished what you need to do in Gallia, please come back here. I have an important thing to tell you.]

[Important thing?]

[Yes, verily. I'll tell you when the time comes. So be sure to stay alive and come back.]

He offered me a handshake afterward.

[Until next time, Fate.]

[Yes, until next time]

I shook his hand as strongly as I could and nod back to Aaron.

Let's return here if I survive Gallia. Aaron and I only had four days this time. There was so many things left I'd like to talk about with him.

Myne looked at me and Aaron shaking our own for a while before finally saying.

[Fate, let's go.]

[Yeah, roger that. Alright, Aaron, everyone. Thank you for having me.]

I got on the carriage, and looked out of the window. I saw them waving their goodbyes.

Aaron told me that he'll revive the city of Hausen back. It'll surely be a lively city in the future. I don't know what will happen to me in Gallia, so I can only wait and see.

Chapter 46

Myne's Request

The carriage we rode steadily made its way toward Gallia. Now that we reached this area, we'll only come across fortified cities that act as the guards of Gallia's border. Probably I'll aim for the city where Roxy's army was stationed at.

[Thank you for everything up until now.]

[The pleasure is mine, I made quite a lot of money from this work after all. But I'm sorry... past this area, it's too dangerous for a horse drawn carriage.]

[No no, it enough to go up to this point.]

I said my thank to the middle-aged coachman who had brought us here. I gave him 15 gold before going.

It appear that I don't have to conceal my identity as a warrior anymore. The coachman said that military carriage appears frequently to recruit passing warriors to help defend the city. Taking a hitch on that carriage to the fortified cities will be much safer.

The coachman said that he'll leave the city once he found another warrior who wanted to return to their homeland. Apparently, this is a place you don't really want to stay in for long.

[Myne, let's go.]

[Alright]

The city we are in now was made for back line support, so a lot of goods came in everyday, to be sent towards the front line. Along with that, there were also warriors, unexpectedly many of them. Apparently they gathered for monster hunting.

In here, requests for monster subjugations were piling like mountains, so you could earn as much as you wanted as a warrior. The reward was also much higher than other

places. This was like a heaven on earth for a well-prepared and skilled warriors. But since the monsters often made a stampede and attacked in groups, these people lived side by side with danger.

There were two types of stampedes, small and large.

Large scale stampedes were often referred to as Death Parades, and it usually fell into the jurisdiction of the Holy Knights and military powers sent from the capital to deal with it. Death Parades consisted of thousands of monsters, and it could wipe out a party of warriors instantaneously.

The small scale stampede consisted of hundreds of monsters and was much smaller in size. The warriors would form big enough party to contend with it. The leader of this big party seemed to be a former holy knight in the past. Former holy knights who still yearned for their old lifestyle in the capital, all of them went here. Apparently, still hoping to make a name for themselves so that they could return to become a holy knight.

[Fate, where are you planning to go?]

[First of all, I'm a bit pissed. Somebody ate the preserved food without telling.]

[Fu~nn, I see.]

The culprit, Myne, didn't seem to reflect on her faults at all. Rather, it seems like she did it purposely to pick on me.

Well, no matter. I'm already quite used to Myne's antics. It's fine as long as she doesn't get mad at me. Keeping to Greed's advice, I tried to not enrage her as much as possible.

It's very rare for Greed to actually urge me that much, so at first I thought to just follow it half-heartedly. But then there was that event where she carried some grudge, but it's enough for her to instantly send a holy knight flying. Now I'd rather not imagine what will happen... if she truly got mad.

[What are you waiting for? Come on.]

[Wait up, don't enter the store as you like.]

I chased after Myne into an unknown shop. Whoops!? This scent... it's meat! The delicious smell caused me to unintentionally drooled.

The inside of the shop was filled with grilled meats. I think I could eat 10 loaves of bread just from the fragrance alone.

I had plenty of money, and seeing that I only had preserved food lately, some luxury should be okay. Were there any vacant seats? I didn't see any empty seats anywhere at all.

Uu~nn, all those seats were mostly occupied by warriors, and they still chatted there even after they're done with their meals. I'd be grateful if they just went out already.

While I was thinking to myself, Myne left my side. She stopped in front of the table occupied by several warriors who were still having some after-meal conversation.

[If you already finished your meal, get out. You're getting in the way of the other people who're waiting.]

She told them in a very flat voice. Ahh, I can already see how this will end somewhat. There is a big chance that terrible things will happen.

I don't want to get involved, so simply watched from some distance.

Those warriors got annoyed of course. The eldest of them waved his hand, as if to shoo Myne away.

[Go away, you eyesore. This is no place for brats. Even if you came to entertain me, that flat chest is...]

Those are one of the many things that should never be said to Myne, as written on my personal Myne Instruction Manual. Being considered brat is one thing, but being told flat chest was what did it. I really have no idea what will happen next.

And then, all the fun atmosphere suddenly froze over.

Aaaaaa... uaaaaaa, that looks it hurt. That too, most likely was very painful. Aa, stop it, that part shouldn't be bent to that direction. Welp, no way... Was that even possible? No, no, Oouwwie, Noooooo. Even I who only looked at it felt terrified.

That 'flat chest' was really a very very dangerous word. I should add this as an entry to my personal Myne Instruction Manual.

The 8 brave warriors who dared to annoy Myne lay sprawled around me, their eyes only showing the white parts. From how their mouth were leaking white foam, it's obvious that they had come across the scariest woman in their whole lifetime. This will surely leave irreparable trauma.

If they could measure Myne's ability, such things wouldn't happen. They were deceived by Myne's childish appearance.

After causing such disaster, Myne leisurely sat on the now vacant seat and beckoned the waitress to come. The waitress was stuttering while hearing Myne's order. The poor lady was shaking on her feet so much...

Myne then called me to sit beside her. I'm afraid that the rest of the customers will become scared of me if I were to be called upon by her at this timing.

[Fate, hurry up. Sit here.]

[Okay, okay, ehh !? I haven't even made any orders.]

Before I could even take a seat, the waitress quickly cleaned up the table and escaped.

Ehh, this can count as torture for the owner of Gluttony skill. Did I accidentally anger her or,

[I've taken care of everything. I'm kind, aren't I?]

There was no way this red eyed girl would let the waitress escape without her consent. I actually wanted to order for something I like, but apparently she already beat me to it.

But anyways her aggressive mind actually brought benefits... so I guess I ought to thank her.

[Thanks. Yeah, Myne is kind.]

[Uu...]

Eh? She actually turned her face away when praised. Unexpectedly, Myne doesn't seem to be accustomed with being praised by others. Thinking about it, she usually act in violence. And those act scares people, so it's not actually something praiseworthy.

I guess it's because she's also a Mortal Sin skill owner like me, that I treated her gentler than how I treat others.

While watching the embarrassed Myne, the order arrived. It was a huge serving of grilled meat, served on a large dish.

Eh? What about mine? Myne then said to me who was about to cry.

[This is for the two of us to share.]

[Hee, so that's how it is. Why are you doing this again?]

We usually ordered our meal separately. It's very unusual for us to share things together like this.

Is it because she wanted to get along more with me? So Myne did still have some common sense. Just when I sighed in relief,

[This is like a ceremony before battle. I will eat the same thing with my colleague before going into battle.]

[Oh... eh, what did you just say?]

[Let's eat this together, then fight enemies. I will have to borrow your power this time.]

Dammit, I take back that saying about Myne is kind. So it's about what she told me when we met again. That she'll need my help on Gallia.

So the time has come to do that. Coming to this fortified city, and help Myne defeat an opponent even she deemed too strong for her...

I had my worries, but I've been waiting for a chance to fight side by side with another Mortal skill holder. Well, it's mandatory in this case, no escape.

I took and chewed on the meat piece that Myne had cut out for me. Meaning, I agreed to join her in battle.

Chapter 47

Green Demi-human

Me and Myne left the city after finishing our meal. We kept going south on foot.

[Hey, where are we heading for?]

The barren land spread into the horizon. If we continued at this pace, we'd ended up by-passing the border and entering Gallia. I kept asking for our destination since I had a bad feeling about this, but Myne also kept ignoring me.

The day grew dimmer as we proceeded. But Myne still didn't show any signs of stopping.

Suddenly, looking eastward, I noticed yellow light in the distance. Probably another fortified city. The base at the most forefront that stops the monsters from overflowing. It's also the place where Roxy will be stationed in for three years.

I really want to go to that place soon. While thinking so, Myne elbowed me in the gut. The pain had sobered me up.

[Don't think about anything else. Focus your mind.]

[Yeah, sorry.]

[Gallia is just around the corner. Heads up.]

There was no apparent sign for what Myne had told me just now. But judging from the cracks and creases on the ground seemingly caused by battles, I could at least tell that we are pretty close already to Gallia.

Alongside Myne, I took my first step toward Gallia.

Eh!? What the... The atmosphere changed!?

I felt cold. Moreover I could smell the scent of blood and death drifting gently in the air.

Just one step, and the difference is this huge!?

I tried walking back to test it out, since I still can feel fresh air just a moment ago. Inhaling the air from both sides. It really felt different.

Something like a invisible wall separated the kingdom and Gallia. It's even fitting to say that here is a different world altogether.

[Let's go, Fate.]

Since I was still hanging out at the edge, Myne decided to call me out.

I replied as I finally moved on,

[Kuuuuuuu...]

Dammit... why the Gluttony skill awakened at times like this? I've repeatedly trained to suppress it, and yet it suddenly flare up just like that? Greed then told me through <Mind Reading>

{Fate, that's the cause. Look far south toward the sky!}

[That... Could it be?]

{Right. It's the Tenryu.}

Under the bright sunshine, a white dragon that could be mistaken as flowing clouds gracefully fly in the sky.

It's too big... just how big exactly is it? With how I can still perceive its size even from this far of distance, I might look like grain when standing next to it.

I wanted to investigate the Tenryu's capabilities, but it was over the effective range.

Myne offered her hand to me who was on my knees.

[You alright?]

[I feel better already.]

When the Tenryu finally faded in the horizon, the Gluttony skill settled down on its own.

Even so, I didn't expect that Gluttony skill will be attracted this much to the Tenryu. The stronger the skill became, the more ridiculous its appetite. This was really troublesome.

While I wiped the sweat on my forehead, Myne gave me an advice.

[Tenryu is too far ahead for Fate. Even by glance, the result is already obvious.]

[Ahahaha... I can't refute that.]

I also thought the same. Tenryu turned out to be much bigger than what I had heard before, and seemed to be incredibly strong too. No wonder people called it a living natural disaster. If a push came to shove, I might've needed to fight it, but how far I could go... I truly had no idea at the moment.

I checked my own stats with <Appraisal>.

Fate Graphite Lv1

Durability: 12256100

Strength: 11234600

Magic: 12312200

Spirit: 11284400

Agility: 13378000

Skill(s): **Gluttony, Appraisal, Mind Reading, Concealment, Night Vision, Martial Arts, Snipe, Holy Sword mastery, One-handed Sword mastery, Two-handed Sword mastery, Bow mastery, Flame Bullet Magic, Dust Magic, Illusion Magic, Durability Strengthening (S), Durability Strengthening (M), Durability Strengthening (L), Strength Strengthening (S), Strength Strengthening (M), Strength Strengthening (L), Magic Strengthening (L), Spirit Strengthening (M), Spirit Strengthening (L), Agility Strengthening (S), Agility Strengthening (M), Auto Recovery, Fire Resistance.**

If with all this I'm still incapable of even reaching the Tenryu's feet, then I don't know anymore how much stronger I need to get.

While staring at the direction where the Tenryu had disappeared to, Myne told me

[Area E. Fate should go there first.]

[Area E?]

What was that? Greed suddenly interjected.

{That's too much... too early}

[Greed, what do you mean?]

{I don't care anymore}

Again like this! Greed kept the information to himself. I do want to know about it, but why won't you tell me anything!? Staring at the black sword in my hand for a while, Myne then said with a sigh.

[Tenryu is in that area. Fate might be able to rise up in power very fast there, thanks to Gluttony skill. But currently, you won't be able to hold on to yourself from being swallowed by the skill.]

[Does that mean I'll lose control and fight only based on the urge from the Gluttony skill?]

[Un, that's right.]

Myne said that lightly, but judging from Greed's reaction, it's most likely true.

The current me cannot afford to go to Area E. In other words, fighting Tenryu is a no go.

[If I start preparing from now on, can I eventually go to Area E?]

[U~n, I think it'll take 10 years since it's Fate we are talking about.]

Oi oi, that's far too long. I cannot afford to spend 10 years. We never know when the Tenryu will pass the border and attack Roxy.

At that point, there would be no turning back.

Myne added some more.

[One more thing, you should never think of defeating the Tenryu. It's the best for the kingdom. It has a role of thinning down the growth of monsters in Gallia. Without it, even more incredible monsters will start appearing and invade the kingdom. This is why, I never lay my hand on the Tenryu.]

[That...]

Once I'm prepared to go to Area E, what will I do if I must not defeat the Tenryu? I tightened my grip on Greed unintentionally.

{What are you worrying about now? There is only 1 thing to do since you've come this far. Can't be helped, this me will assist you somehow.}

[...Greed.]

{Let's deal with Myne's problem first thing first.}

[Yeah, you're right.]

No matter how hard I thought about it, there would be no answer if I kept worrying. For now I'll just accompany Myne crossing through Gallia.



I kept walking through the desolated land. The sky had been completely enveloped in darkness, with stars twinkling in between the clouds.

How much further do we have to go? Whilst taking out a dried meat from my bag, I glanced at Myne who walked at the front.

She's moving lightly with the huge black axe on her waist. That form, judging from what I learned from Aaron, allowed her to move effectively while still being able to

shift into battle stance at any given time. However, she did so very naturally. Truly an ideal form.

At that point, Myne suddenly stopped and readied her axe.

[Fate, it's the enemy. A small scale stampede.]

[Eh, where?]

She actually perceived faraway enemy presence that could not be sensed by me who had <Night Vision>, and pointed northward. Nhn? I still couldn't see anything... did she sense wrong?

After a while, whilst raising a huge dust cloud behind their path, green skinned pig-faced creature finally made its appearance. There were about 200 of them. Unlike goblins, their body was solidly muscled. They were also fairly tall, about 1.5 times taller than me. They hadn't entered the effective range for appraisal just yet.

[Myne, can we avoid them?]

[We can't, since our destination is just beyond there. They are in the way, so let's just kill them all and proceed.]

[Alright. It's almost time for me to feel hungry too.]

While I drew Greed out, Myne told me.

[Those pig faces, orcs, are the monster with the biggest population in Gallia. They attack with primitive weapons like carved stone axe or bare handedly. Use your head, fight them as if you're fighting against humans.]

[Does that mean they may also cooperate with each other?]

[Yes, so unless you forgot everything you've learned from Aaron, Fate won't have any trouble fighting them.]

Their number amounted to 200, isn't that the same as a single company in the military? The orcs approached with primitive weapons in their hands. Their weapons consisted of shields, bows, swords, and spears of various shapes.

It seemed that each of them was responsible for a specific role. As Myne said, it'll be best to fight them as if I'm fighting a human. Even though I had much higher stats, their collective attacks were nothing to be scoffed at.

The orcs company finally noticed our presence, and stopped some distance ahead of us. A blue skinned orc, one with different skin color to the others behind it, roared.

With that roar as a signal, they started to release arrows and magics at once.

[What!?]

I hurriedly switched the black sword into scythe form. Spinning my scythe, I cut through the rain of arrows and tore down the fireballs. It seemed that the magic the orcs released was fire magic. But I don't want to get hit by it regardless of my fire resistance.

They kept releasing arrows and magic without stop. Making me unable to close in.

No way, could it be that they are waiting for my stamina to bottom up? In any case, it'll be bad for us if this turned into a battle of attrition.

Glancing at the orcs at the distance, I suddenly heard a sigh.

[Good grief... to be unable to move to this degree. Such a sorry state.]

[If you have time to say that, then tell me what should we do]

Even Myne was suppressed by the barrage of arrows and magic. But just when I thought about that,

[Eeeh, uaaaaaa]

Suddenly Myne scrapped the ground with her black axe. A large chunk of earth was scooped up into the sky. Completely blocking our line of sight. This is bad! Why did she do that!?

The stream of arrows and magic stopped, seemingly unable to pierce through the chunk of earth.

So it's to give us some room to breath. Myne then pulled my hand, and dragged me to move sideways.

[If you only stand there, there is no point in blocking their line of sight. Run around and poke them in their flank. Come, help me out.]

[Of course, if there is no place to hide, you simply have to create one! As expected of Myne!]

[That much is nothing... nothing.]

With a little blush on her face, Myne let go of my hand.

Then I'll just do it. I reverted Greed back into black sword form, and start running. Myne lifted another chunk next to the previous one when we are about to pass it.

I could almost hear the noise of the upset orc who lost their sight on us. Now then, let's begin our counterattack.

Chapter 48

Dance of the Black Axe

Taking the advantage of the confused green army, we used the dust cloud to charge at their right flank.

Even I didn't want to get outperformed by Myne. Grasping the black sword tightly, I charged into the orc herd. I didn't use the black arrow form since I'm scared of the possibility of them teaming up against me.

Against creatures with human-like intelligence like the orcs, I should refrain myself from using the bow and magic arrow. Just like I expected, the rear guards assisted the retreat with their swords and shields, and the spearmen quickly intercepted me.

But even so, these guys were far cry when compared to Aaron. I ran through them while slashing my sword around. I took out roughly 32 orcs along my path.

<Gluttony Skill is activated>

<Durability +156800, Strength +153600, Magic +121600, Spirit +128000, Agility +121600 will be applied to your stats>

<Spear Mastery, Magic Strengthening(S), Magic Strengthening(M), Spirit Strengthening(S) will be added to your skills>

Because my existing skills overlapped with theirs, I only ended up getting fewer than expected. Regardless, these monsters' souls were fairly delicious and gave a decent amount of stats. Each of them gave roughly four thousand stats.

Meanwhile, I can feel that the Gluttony skill was in a really good mood. It felt very different than when I was hunting down goblins. Right now the skill would probably go berserk if I were to feed it anything less.

Well, I guess it's because Orc's stats are like 100 times higher than that of a goblin?

It ought to be satisfied. Cause I'm gonna fight the enemies to the fullest, like Myne told me to.

I slashed the black sword right to left, left to right, slaughtering the orcs that crossed my path.

Whilst listening to the inorganic voice on my head, I killed the 70th orc. There were 200 of them, right? If we split their amount by half for each of us, that means I only need to kill 30 more.

While I was wondering how Myne is faring, countless orcs fell from the sky. It was over. She made it rain orcs today... I was dumbstruck.

I looked at the position where Myne was fighting on. Aah, this somewhat reminds me of that. Back then, when we were at that strictly controlled city, we got involved with a certain Holy Knight. It seemed that Myne used the exact same technique she used to toss that holy knight to the sky.

Anything Myne hit with the black axe actually flew to sky just like that. And then landed on another world.

It was a fancy style. Even so, regardless of the fanciness, there were no wasted movements. She launched her enemies one by one without much effort and with minimal moves. It was very pleasant to watch that I could even consider it a dance.



I wonder if I can do it too. Let's try to imitate it,

{Buhahahaha!Silly dancing}

[Don't laugh, Greed. From here, to there]

{It's awful... Really, it's terrible. You have your own fighting style taught by Aaron, don't you? That Myne is someone who was considered a genius from when she was born. No matter how many times you try, you won't be able to copy her.}

What the, so it was inborn natural talent... that's actually pretty cool. I want one too! Well, as for me, I guess I actually also got one when I was born...

I observed Myne's movement whilst cleaning up the remaining orcs.

Welllll, it does seem like she fights without much thought in her mind. As if her body moved even before her mind could think up the move.

Can your body actually move that precisely without thinking...? I guess I wouldn't know without trying it.

As expected, having a strong warrior on your side was really a great help in battle. Noticing my stare, Myne smiled back. She then flung an orc at me.

That could prove to be a danger for me.

Perhaps, she's trying to tell me to not just stand around and get all this wrapped up quickly.

Aye aye, I'll fight. It's alright to peek a little, right? After all, this is the first time I saw Myne fighting properly. While I was thinking that, two more orcs came flying.

Alright, let's do our best. Otherwise, I fear that she'll fling 10 or more orcs at me next. That amount was still possible for her of course.

So let's send these orcs to a blood festival. These guys let out a disgusting buhhyyii noise when they were knocked down and killed. Thanks to the massacre, all that was left was the blue skinned orc who led the company.

Let's see, activate <Appraisal> before it gets troublesome. Buhyyiii and all.

High Orc leader lv45

Durability: 203400

Strength: 217500

Magic 175300

Spirit: 154300

Agility: 168400

Skill: Herculean Strength, Strength Strengthening (Large), Durability Strengthening (Large).

Those were quite the stats. Is it really not a crown tier, but merely a normal monster?

The rank of monsters in Gallia is really on a different level.

I tried to <Appraise> the Herculean Strength skill that took my interest.

Herculean Strength: doubles Strength for a certain duration. After the skill duration is over, Strength is reduced to 1/10. Will recover back to original value after one day.

It seems to be a stat enhancement skill. It's only temporary, but doubling strength can be really useful. It does come with a risk of strength being reduced to 1/10 for a day afterward. Still, it can be considered as a trump card, so let's use it only for emergency.

With that, thank you for the meal. I quickly slashed at the orc leader who refused to give up even after losing its men.

[Buhhyiiii]

But it was snatched away by Myne who came from the side. The high orc leader was flung to the sky by the black axe. It's instant death no matter how I saw it.

[Wait, Myne. Let me eat it. I need that Herculean Strength skill...].

[There are a lot of orcs in Gallia. Besidely, from my point of view, that herculean strength skill, is a trash skill.]

[But it doubles strength temporarily, you know?]

[But there is a drawback. So it's trash skill.]

Oioi, it still doubles strength though.

Myne put down the black axe on the ground and took a break next to me who was still sulking from not getting the skill I wanted.

At that point, the ground started to collapse.

What!? The axe is actually that heavy? I remember back then that it was not that heavy when I tried to lift it during the time Myne was sleeping... that's weird.

Myne whispered something to the axe while stroking it.

[That's alright. Sloth is a good child. Please accumulate more.]

Accumulate... more weight I guess. Undoubtedly.

While I was thinking, Myne beckoned for me to sit next to her.

[Fate, let's take a break. Come, quickly.]

[Err, I'm not tired yet.]

[Always rest after the battle. It's important!]

[Wait a min-uaaaa]

She forcibly pulled me to the ground. Guhee... it hurt.

[Ahaa, Myne is as aggressive as ever.]

[That was nothing.]

[No, it's not like I'm praising you.]

[Ara, that's a shame.]

[Do you really think so?]

[Not really.]

Un, this is how it always was. She had a personality that was hard to grasp sometimes.

Two people sitting on the ground, looking at the starry night sky for a while. There was no conversation to be heard, just the sound of the chirping bugs.

Now then, how much further does Myne want us to go? She stood up after the break was over, and told me while pointing toward a direction with her axe.

[It's already not that far. Unless something else happened.]

[What do you mean?]

[That is that.]

What the hell was that supposed to mean!? I asked Greed in case he knew something.

[What was Myne trying to say actually?]

{Fu, that is that indeed.}

You too. Don't play around with me, answer seriously!

Nevermind, I'll naturally find out once we got there. Then let's just hurry to wherever this place would be.

We continued to stride deeper into Gallia.

Chapter 49

Village of Oblivion

After numerous battles against the orcs, this village was finally devastated.

Only the rough shapes of the houses' foundations and the piling up rubbles remained. It looks more like a mountain of rocks and soil due to years of corrosion by the weather.

Is this where that enemy even Myne considered to be strong resides? I really don't think so.

Walking ahead, she turned her head around and said.

[This is where I was born. I was immediately brought to the imperial city soon after my birth, so I barely have any memory here. Regardless, this is an important place for me.]

[Wow... so this is, Myne's birthplace?]

Nhnn!? Isn't this strange? Thousand of years seemed to have passed since the village was destroyed. On the other hand, Gallia was destroyed about 4000 years ago.

According to what Myne had said just now, the village was still functioning when she was born.

In other words, Myne's actual age is more than 4000 years old.

This must be wrong... because, she had that childlike look.

By the way, when she did said that she's [A ghost that is not allowed to die] to Aaron back then. From that I knew that she had lived for a very long time, but I never expected that it had been more than 4000 years.

The numbers was too surprising. If that's the case, not to mention me, she could even

consider Aaron as a kid.

Still, 4000 years..... I had lived for 16 years. I felt that getting to this point was a very long period already. And yet, Myne had already spent more than 200 times of that period.

Since she had lived since a very distant time, it's no wonder that some details in memory became lost or fuzzy.

Also, Greed told me that he and Myne knew each other. Does that mean he'd already existed 4000 years ago?

Greed also said that he and Myne shared some sort of relationship in the past, but he had given up on it since he can't turn back to his former appearance.

I suppose there was a certain driving force that kept Myne going for these past 4000 years. I think I'll find out about it in the meantime. If, by chance, it had something to do with the Mortal Sin skill, I shouldn't act as an outsider.

[Myne, is there something we need to defeat in this village?]

[Un, it's a bad match for me. That's why, I need Fate's power.]

[What kind of creature is that? Is it okay for us to walk around like this?]

[It's fine. You'll find out what kind of creature it is when we actually meet it.]

Apparently, it's not the kind of enemy that will ambush us.

I kept my hand on Greed's handle since I was still worried.

Even so, there were no monsters here at all. It's frighteningly quiet.

At the center of the desolate village, there were grave markers. Sides by sides, with some of them damaged due to the changing weather.

A white cocoon of unusual size sat above those grave markers.

What the, is that really a monster!? Is it okay to approach something that big!? Without

much thought I drew Greed out from his scabbard.

Greed's bitter voice could be heard via <Mind Reading>

{Chi, to think this thing is still alive... damn bastard}

[Greed, what is that?]

{An angel chimera. Back in ancient Gallia, it was an experimental project of the imperial kingdom's guardian. It was supposed to cease all of its function years ago.}

[You mean, this is an ancient weapon?]

{Good guess. This was Gallian Military biological weapon. It was made by splicing together various kinds of monsters. In my viewpoint, this was the worst failure ever.}

A failure!? That doesn't sound good.

Watching from here, it stayed quietly inside its cocoon, so I suppose it's better to leave it be. I gave Myne a glance.

[We'll defeat that. Fate, are you ready?]

Aaaaa, as expected she's planning to defeat it.

Even so it's huge... almost 15 times my height. Moreover, it was covered in cocoon so I can't see its real appearance.

This was the first time for me to fight something of this scale, so I don't really know what I should do.

Myne then told me with a bitter smile.

[It's not in adult form yet. So the current Fate should be able to fight it. The problem is, it won't die as long as its soul remained. That's why we're going to need Gluttony skill.]

[The ability to eat its victim's soul?]

[Right, since your mortal sin skill is the most sinful of all]

I don't want to have a quarrel with God though.

I was born with Gluttony skill. Thanks to this skill, I was overlooked by the Gods that I'm unable to level up regardless how many monsters I had slain.

Thus I had to rely on Gluttony skill to grow stronger. Even so, it doesn't mean that I'm in control of this skill.

If I ever show any gap, this ridiculous skill will try to devour me.

Wait a minute, she said that the Gluttony is the most sinful of all mortal sin skills.

[Did you just said that Gluttony is the strongest among all mortal sin skills?]

[Yes. It's the only sin skill that can theoretically break through the concept of level which Gods have created. However, before that happened, the user usually already got swallowed by the skill itself.]

[Because of it's progressively growing sense of taste, I knew that well. What is Wrath's rank among the mortal sin skills?]

[Wrath is in 4th place. Under both Lust and Greed. Actually, all of them are actually evenly matched to a degree. Only Gluttony is on a different level].

When Myne mentioned Greed, my mind inevitably wandered to the black sword in my hand.

Greed sniffled in response to that.

{Sinful weapons depended on their wielder. Such hierarchy is meaningless.}

[Could it be, your abilities depended on me as your wielder?]

{Of course. If Fate doesn't serve any use for me, I would've killed you long ago. Come on, unlock my next rank faster!}

I wouldn't be struggling if it was easy. The next rank isn't available even after I

absorbed the Lich Lord's stats. To think that it's not enough, Greed is really too greedy.

Well, not just stats, mental attitude of the wielder is also taken into account, so I guess my mentality isn't matured yet. Ah, I wish I can be like Aaron as fast as possible.

While sighing, I glanced at the cocoon. Let's use <Appraisal> on it before fighting.



Machine Angel Haniel Lv1

Durability: 26000000

Strength: 29000000

Magic: 24000000

Spirit: 28000000

Agility: 14000000

Skills: -ERROR-



Strooooooong! And it's not even an adult yet.

Apart from Agility, all of its stats were twice of my own.

Moreover, there was only **ERROR** written on the skill, I wonder why.

If I attack it from the front like this, I'm afraid it will counter attack immediately.

This is a strong enemy. Myne shrugged her shoulder and told me.

[You're not going to fight it alone. I'll help you. From how you fought the Orcs, I can guess that Fate isn't used to this kind of battle yet. That's why, I'll help Fate to adapt.]

[That'll be appreciated. Anyways, what is this **ERROR** on its skill means?]

[The Machine Angel Chimera is a combination of various monsters. The appraisal skill cannot read it properly because its skill is unstable due to it being artificial creature created from forcibly fusing monsters, so you don't have to worry about it.]

No, that's not the case. Even if you say so, it's still an important piece of information.

That only means that the machine angel Haniel hold numerous but incomplete skills.

Up until now, I always had this sense of security since I knew my opponents' skill in advance. But it's not the case now against this machine angel Haniel.

This battle is far off from my comfort zone...

I can feel the tension rising even from just watching it. Greed then said to me through **<Mind Reading>**.

{This is a good opponent for you. If you fail here, then you can forget about beating Tenryu/Heavenly Dragon. Now wield me properly!}

[I know that already even without you telling me to.]

I drew out the black sword.

Upon seeing that my preparations were completed, Myne brandished her black axe and started attacking.

One heavy blow later, the cocoon started to crack. It's broke like the shell of an egg.

As the thick cocoon crumbled down, the chimera angel showed its appearance. As I thought, it was huge.

Its form seemed to be forcefully sewn together with metallic pipes. All of the different parts of the monster that constituted it eerily had the same color...

All of it were colored in white as though it was bleached. At its core—I was stunned when I looked at the center of its chest.

[is that... a human!?]

[That is the core of the machine angel.]

The view of long silver haired girl entered my eyes. The color of her eyes were unmistakably crimson.



Chapter 50

Barrier Angel

That machine angel Haniel, she had the same red eyes as Myne, and was similar to when I was in starving state.

I don't want to think like this, but I felt like there was something that connected us.

[Myne, that child at the core...]

At the same time I said that, Haniel's core stared at me.

I was immediately attacked by immense pressure, that it's hard for me to breathe.

This is... this is the same as me. When both of my eyes turned red, I'm able to frighten anyone I stare at as long as they have lower stats than me.

Of course, Haniel does have much higher stats than I do.

Greed then said through the <Mind Reading>

{Move your eyes away. If you keep looking at her eyes, you'll be frightened and rendered unable to even fight.}

Damn, I never thought the day will come when I had to look away from my opponent.

So what should I do? I can't fight properly if I stare at the core's eyes.

This is really bad... it's embarrassing to let Myne see me in this condition.

[Don't fall over just from such thing. Man up.]

[Even if you say that...]

I tried looking at Haniel's core once more. Yeah, I immediately felt my body stiffened...

Really, what should I do?

The enemy didn't feel like waiting though. It immediately started attacking with its six limbs.

[It can't be helped. Fate attack its leg until you can get used to the pressure. I'll handle the more troublesome core. However, the deciding blow has to be done by the Gluttony skill owner.]

[Could it be, that deciding blow... as I thought.]

[Yes, you'll have to attack the core.]

Of course. We need to destroy its core to properly defeat it.

However, there was that girl in the core. It'll be hard for me to cut her down,

[That thing is no longer human. It's a monster disguised as human. Don't get fooled by its appearance.]

[...But]

[You'll die if you keep thinking that way. Fate, incoming attack!]

[Whaar!]

Haniel's core moved its hands and created bluish fire balls. Circling itself with it.

Then it pounded the ring of flame into the ground. The devastating heat caused the ground who came in contact with it to turn into lava.

An indirect magical attack. This is bad, even if I switched to scythe form, I won't be able to dispel it.

I could only looked at the red wall heading toward me like tsunami, waiting for Myne to solve this.

Because the core had human form, I couldn't get myself to feel worked up. It was trying

to kill us. But even so, I didn't know if I could muster up enough courage to face it.

There was no choice. I switched to black bow form, and ready myself to sacrifice some stats.

While I was thinking about that, Myne moved forward and swung her black axe.

[Get behind me. Fate cover with magic arrow. When you're ready, we'll attack together. Alright?]

[O-okay, roger that. But, how will you stop that?]

[I'll do this, ei!]

The shout sounded pretty, but the swinging of the black axe was intense.

The impact blew back the approaching wall of lava back. So strong that it was enough to reach Haniel and make it fall on its knees.

[Now then, let's get started. Fate keep Haniel restricted.]

[I'll do my best so as not to hold you back.]

[That's the spirit.]

Myne approached Haniel, and swung at its right arm.

The core cried in pain. Blood trickled out of its red eyes.

[Kuu... damn it.]

Again, I accidentally looked into the core's eyes. I quickly turned away and get moving.

I'm tasked with duty of restricting Haniel's movement. So that Myne can attack effectively.

Since that's the case, the magic I needed to imbue into the magic arrow is obvious.

I drew the black bow, and knocked the magic arrow. Then imbued it with Dust magic.

Producing a petrifying magic arrow.

Even the crown tier monster like Lich Lord was turned to stone by it. Now that my stats are higher than before, I should be able to petrify some parts of the machine angel.

I aimed at tone of Haniel's feet, and release the magic arrow.

The core was writhing in pain. Even if it tried to forcefully stand up, its body was like attached to the ground.

[Alright, that's a success.]

{Too early to celebrate, Fate}

Greed drew my attention via <Mind Reading>.

Oioi, is that even possible? I'll just shoot it again with more petrification arrows.

The petrified leg was returning to its original state at a visible rate. What is that? Some kind of recovery ability? The level was way too high compared to my Auto Recovery.

Not just the foot. The arm that Myne had cut off is also growing back at visible pace.

[What the hell with this recovery ability]

{It's a military biological weapon. It's designed to fight alone on unspecified duration. That level of damage will only get recovered immediately. You'll have to continue restricting it until Myne is able to strike a fatal blow. After that, you'll have to deliver the finishing attack.}

This was a huge responsibility. If I'm late even a little bit, the Haniel would just recover and we'd have to start all over again.

No matter how strong Myne was, I can't simply rely on her alone, it'll just hinder her.

I had to do this properly.

But before that, I needed to create an opening for her. I shot another petrification

arrow.

This should stop the troublesome creature a little.

[Myne! Are you ready?]

[No problem]

As long as its movement was restricted, it's good for Myne to go. She cut away at the growing arm again and also the other arm. Her axe seemed to grow stronger with each blow.

I asked for Greed's thought while supporting Myne with petrification arrows.

[Is Myne's black axe power goes up every time she attacks with it?]

{Well, you can say it that way. The attack power rises as you attack. But the weight also increases. In other words, although it doesn't have upper ceiling in term of attack power, it also gets harder to wield it overtime.}

[oh, so that's why... that's why the ground collapsed when Myne put the axe down.]

If the attack power increment from fighting the orcs was maintained, then the black axe will have a tremendous weight right now. It's evident from how each of Myne's step created a deep cavity on the ground.

{That weapon—Sloth has great destructive power, but it greatly hampered its wielder's agility in return due to its progressively increasing weight.}

[But the way I see it now, Myne's speed isn't slowing down yet.]

{No, she's gradually slowing down. Why do you think she asked you to restrict Haniel in the first place?}

Unn, it's only a little, but she does get slowed down now.

Meanwhile, Myne managed to blow away Haniel's head with the black axe.

The core's cries became even louder. Its face was drenched in blood.

I couldn't look directly into its eyes since it frightens me, as if those eyes naturally shoot out fear out of it.

Suddenly the air around us changed. What the!? What's with this unpleasant pressure!?

Greed immediately warned me.

{Chi, this is bad. We'll have to defeat it as soon as possible, it has reached its adulthood. Fate, be careful!}

[Adulthood!? What!?]

Myne who had been fighting Haniel jumped away in retreat.

She landed next to me. The weight of the axe caused the ground to unexpectedly dented. Making me to lose balance in the aftermath.

[Fate, behind me. An attack stronger than before is incoming.]

Apparently, the adult Haniel thought that it had gained enough power to wipe us out.

Myne knew this, to the point she retreated from the fight to cover for me.

To be honest, I feel both thankful and miserable at the same time. This way, can it still be called working together anymore?

I can't say that for sure.

Then, what if I have the power to fight it head on? Hmm~... I can only try.

[Greed, do you think it will be enough if I do that?]

{I knew you'll say that. However, never forget to not push yourself too hard. It's quite a different matter going over there by yourself. You'll get swallowed if you went too far. Never forget that.}

[Yeah, I understand. I'll show you that I won't get swallowed by the Gluttony skill since

I've come this far.]

Come! I called upon the Gluttony skill.

Usually, I devoted myself to suppress the hunger of Gluttony skill at bay. But this time, it's the other way around.

In order to fight Haniel on an even ground, I had to unleash the gluttony skill starving state. In order to gain that physical abilities boost, I dared myself to invoke the hungry beast within me.

I felt and unknown thing wandered inside my body. Then, I started to feel the hunger for souls in a blink of an eye.

.....this gradual sharpening of body sensation.

Do not step past this limit. Suppress the gluttony skill to not cross that line... yosh, it's done.

Myne was surprised upon seeing what I did.

[That reddened right eye. To control half of the Gluttony skill through sheer will alone... that much after such a short period.]

[Even I have to step up sometimes. I don't want Myne to treat me like a child forever.]

[Ooh, how reliable. Fine, I'll consider you as an adult if we won this battle.]

[Even if you don't, I will still win this. Let's go!]

At this point, I can only control the Gluttony skill's hunger for a limited time. We'll have to defeat Haniel before my mind broke down, and I had to consume its soul since I'll definitely get swallowed by the skill otherwise. This was something I shouldn't do unless I'm very sure that I can defeat the enemy with it.

The risk was high, but it's necessary to even out the match. Regardless, since I'm the owner of the Gluttony skill, I'll eventually have to make use of it anyways.

This is a power you can't trust. I'll keep looking for the best way to coexist with it. One

of the answer is to learn how to draw out its power when needed.

I stared at the adult Haniel's red eyes. There was no fear or pressure this time around.

Thanks to semi-starving state, I was able to negate Haniel's pressure. This way I could fight at the front line along side Myne.

I drew out the black sword, and brandished it toward the four winged Haniel. Even now, the core was still shedding tears of blood.

迫りくる溶岩の壁を衝撃で吹き飛ばしたのだ。
さらに後方のハニエルにまで届いて
膝をつかせるほどだ。

「さあ、私たちも始めよう。
フェイトはハニエルを
動けないようにして」

「足を引っ張らない
ように頑張るさ」

「その意気」

マインは黒斧を片手にハニエルへ接近。
そして右腕を押し切る。

叫び声を上げる核。
赤い目から薄らと、真っ赤な血が滲み出す。



Chapter 51

Drawing Power

Haniel spread its feathers to its surrounding when it flapped its wings.
That spectacle reminded me of something. Myne warned me while I was watching the falling feathers...

[It'll explode when touched. Be careful.]

[If all of that exploded, not even bones will remain.]

Myne and I promptly went in. Aiming for the Haniel. Since I had pulled out half of Gluttony's hunger, my physical capabilities received substantial boost. Even now, I can clearly see all those falling feathers without missing one.

Also, all of my stats, no, I must make do with what I have. I'll devour Haniel before the time limit.

The feathers that fell to the ground began to detonate, causing the atmosphere to heat up. Large amount of feathers flew towards me from the right side due to the irregular wind.

Just in time, let's use that.

[Greed, shall we?]

{Absurd. There is no way this me will be scratched from that. But what about you?}

[The time is right. Let's go!]

I deliberately ignored him.

I cut away at a feather with the black sword. Sure enough, a huge explosion occurred, propelling me to the air. This degree of burns will get healed shortly thanks to auto recovery.

In mid-air, I switched to the black bow and told Greed.

[I didn't get here merely from luck alone. Greed, take away 10% of my stats.]

{Very well, I'll do that. 10% of your stats!}

The black bow changed shape immediately. I aimed the black bow which had turned into the instrument of death toward Haniel.

The magic arrow is formed, already infused with Dust magic.

I will turn those feathers along with Haniel into stone. There was still Myne among the flock of feathers, but it'll be okay. I have Greed to control the magic arrow's path. So even if I fired the arrow while closing my eyes, I still wouldn't hit Myne.

[Let's go, Greed!]

The empowered petrifying arrow was fired, shooting through the air like a lightning bolt. Along the way, it branched into many, shooting down countless feathers all at once, turning them into stone before they can detonate.

Haniel itself was hit by the main arrow. Its body won't get fully petrified, but regardless, the magic arrow still packed a lot of punch.

With tremendous power, a huge chunk of Haniel's body were rendered petrified.

I shouted to Myne whilst floating in midair.

[Myne, now!]

Even without my words, Myne already knew what to do as she was already on her way to approach Haniel directly.

The partially petrified Haniel was full of gaps.

[Perfect opportunity. Here we go. Sloth, release!]

Myne held the axe up and swung. In response to that, the black axe changed shape instantaneously.

The axe head became bigger and sharper in preparation to unleash all the power it had accumulated so far. As the dark light turned brighter, the weight also seemed like it increased further.

Myne slugged that overwhelming destructive power on to the petrified Haniel.

The destructive power gouged a huge hole on the ground as well as blowing away Haniel's lower body. The aftershock was terrible too as it was enough to send the

remnants and debris of the old village everywhere.

[What the... that's too powerful]

{Don't be surprised with only that. Fate, it's time!}

[Ou!]

Haniel lost its lower body. But thanks to its regenerative ability, it will regain the lost parts in no time.

I need to strike at its core at once.

Using the momentum from my fall, I struck at Haniel.

When I was about to switch back to the black sword,

{Fate, change to the black scythe!}

Haniel, who was aware of my attack, invoked a blue fireball around it to retaliate. Not only targeting me, but also Myne who was still nearby.

I cut down the blue fireballs that headed towards me and continued closing in toward Haniel. If it's still under this form, the black scythe will be able to dispel the blue fireball.

Seeing that its attack was ineffective, Haniel then projected a blue barrier.

{That barrier is also a skill. Cut it down with the scythe!}

[Okay, I'll do just that]

Kuu, for the first time I felt resistance when trying to cut a skill down. Up until now, the black scythe would simply cut effortlessly. But right now, it felt like trying to cut through metal.

Apparently, the barrier was strong enough that it can resist the black scythe.

The barrier and the scythe competed to overpower each other. At that point, Greed...

{What's wrong, Fate!? Is the limit of releasing half of Gluttony's power only to this extent?}

[Shut up!]

{Observe the barrier with that eye of yours! There is no way that this kind of barrier can be evenly spread.}

So I can even see such things with the red eye... concentrating myself, it's as if I've arrived at a different world.

There are blood-like veins that circulate across Haniel's blue barrier. Some of them were active while the rest were stagnant.

[Could this be the flow of magic?]

{That's right. All you need is target the right place!}

Pulling out the scythe, I once again attacked the part where the magical power is the thinnest according to Greed.

Hitting on ever-changing spots, the slashes did interestingly break through the barrier much more easily.

And after a certain extent, the black scythe's power to dissolve skills finally went through and the barrier broke with the sound of breaking glass.

[Yosh!]

{Let's put a stop to it now, Fate! }

Maintaining the momentum of my scythe, I slashed at Haniel's remaining upper body. It tried to defend by crossing its arms, but it's in vain. The scythe will still fall upon it.

It opened up a very large gash, cutting through Haniel's hand and the core in its chest. The white girl who served as the core struggled as she was getting torn in half.

Even if I knew that I have to and while I was doing it, it still feels like there is something stabbing my heart.

While I was hesitating, Haniel started to flap its wings, attempting to escape by spreading the exploding feathers.

I couldn't fly so I won't be able to attack it if it's high above in the sky.

I fell down to the ground while trying to slash apart the feathers and when I thought to jump in pursuit, it was already out of reach. At this rate, Haniel will start regenerating.

Che, red blots bloomed on the ground below me. My red right eye had started to bleed. It appears that I'm approaching my limit. Quick, I need to eat Haniel's soul before I lose myself.

While I was frustrated from Haniel's trick to buy some time, Myne joined in.

[I can launch Fate up to the sky.]

[How!?]

My! You want me to ride on the flat part of the axe head, just like that!? Well, it's not because I'm the holder of Gluttony skill, right?

[Come on, quick. Before Haniel recovers.]

[I know already.]

I have no decisive attack. The strongest attack I have now, the black bow—the killing strike I got when I unlocked the first tier. But at this range, the damage won't be enough to overpower Haniel's regenerative power.

I need a high power attack for a single target.

What should I do? Shoot the powered black bow at close range?
That's a totally unreasonable method, but also all I have...

{Isn't it about time to try out the killing strike of the second tier?}

[What's with that? Withholding it until only just now.]

{It's because Fate won't be able to handle it before. But in your current condition, it should be fine.}

I was about to ask him what it is, but Myne forcefully put me on the black axe before I could do that.

[Quick, no time to play around. You can talk while in the air. Go already!]

[Wai-uaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaaa]

Before I could say anything, I was propelled toward Haniel.
Oioi, I tried to ask Greed in a panic.

[Quickly tell me!]

{The killing strike of the second tier requires 20% of your stats. Also, it has to be aimed at the part where enemy's magical power is concentrated at. If otherwise, it will fail.}

[What the. The place where magic concentrates, how do I even fi...]

No, I can find it now.

With half of Gluttony's power unlocked, I should be able to find it just like how I did with the barrier.

I'm getting close to Haniel. It appears to be preparing for retaliation. I didn't notice that. It can't be helped, can't it?

[Greed, take 20% of my stats!]

{Then I'll take it. 20% of your stats.}

He already consumed 10% from when I used the black bow. Now that he took another 20%, the gap of the statuses between me and Haniel increased.

Though still barely clinging.

In other words, I can't afford to fail this second-tier killing strike.

Meanwhile, Greed took the stats away from me. The feeling of power escaped my body. The black scythe fed upon my power and started to change.

Chapter 52

The Third Tier

3 blades appeared side-by-side. The current black scythe's form would remind the onlookers of the claws of a beast.

Its size had also grown bigger, making the already originally hard-to-wield weapon to become even more cumbersome

Just like the changes to the black bow, this one's size had also expanded. I can see now why this is called a Mortal Sin weapon as it does something like this without permission.

From the pressure transmitted to my hand alone, I realized that this is a weapon of tremendous power.

When I looked up again, it seemed that Haniel is still focusing on recovering itself.

[We can go on if it's like this!]

{Find where the magic power is focused at}

I quickly scanned the area with the red eye as soon as Greed told me to.

The inside of Haniel's body was pulsating with strands of magical power like twigs branching out of a tree so I tried to trace it back to its origin...

It was just like what I expected. The source of the magic power was the girl who acts as the core. The target I was looking for is actually her heart.

With it as the center, magic power coursed through Haniel's whole body.

If I can split the heart with this sinister scythe, it'll be over.

The problem is Haniel's self regeneration. Even if its head or arms are cut off, it will regenerate back in no time.

However, it seemed that the phenomenal self regeneration had slowed down

somehow.

The lower body that Myne had blown off hadn't regenerated yet. Neither did the arms that I had cut off.

[Is it weakened?]

{It forced itself to mature. As a result, its regeneration had slowed down. It's still there though. It just needs more time}

[If that's the case, I'll use this chance to settle this.]

{Why of course.}

I wielded the huge scythe and took aim. I'll slice it apart as we pass through each other. At that point, Haniel seemed to notice me and prepared to do something.

It briskly surrounded itself with barrier.

The core also began to do something different. This movement... no way!?

Several blue flames appeared in the confined space...

{Tsk, Haniel wants to drag us along to the grave. It actually burned itself out}

There is no place to escape. Did it try to take me along as I defeated it?

Haniel had tremendous self-healing. Even if it's a bit slow, it can still regenerate itself to full health.

On the other hand, my auto-recovery won't heal fatal injuries. If I touched the blue flame inside such a confined space, I'll die before the skill can even activate.

What to do... should I just call off the killing blow, wasting 20% of my stats and use the original black scythe to cut through? Or...

However, if I do that, there will be no second chance.

[If that's so, then I'll just eat it before it can burn me.]

{You don't mean, Fate!}

The blue fire balls that are floating in between me and Haniel started to expand.

Hot... my clothes are burning and my skin is getting hot.

My field of vision is dyed with blue. But still, I didn't lose track of my target.

{Fate, be careful!}

[I'm alright, watch.]

I've been observing Haniel's body movement for a while now. In particular, the movement of its right arm.

From inside the whirlpool of blue flames, Haniel's right arm stretched out trying to grab me.

I used that as a stepping stone instead and jumped to the core.

{This is it, Fate!}

[Uooooooooooooooo!]

The core became furious as I plunged into it.

The white girl kept staring me with her red eyes. Even now, it's still dripping with blood.

At first, she seemed like she was about to do something with her hands, but never quite finished it.

It's as if she's telling me to kill her already.



The black scythe that has turned into a sinister weapon cut to her chest. Without a doubt, the blades passed through the magic power source.

At that moment, the white girl's hand reached out and touched my cheek. <Mind Reading> was activated in that instance, revealing her thoughts.

It was a fragmented memories. Perhaps, her memories before being turned into this monstrosity.

It was about a facility with pure white rooms where she lived with similar children like her. It was lively at first, but the children were being taken away one by one to somewhere else.

And finally the girl herself was also taken somewhere that looks to be a dimly lit room. There was another girl there who embraced her as she cried in fear... this particular girl had a strong resemblance to Myne.

However, unlike Myne, this girl had a distinctively richer feeling in her.

What... are this memories!? Meanwhile, the memory feed stopped there as the girl's arms fell off.

When I came to and looked back, I found that Haniel's white body started to blacken.

[Greed, this is!?]

{This is the killing blow of this me's second tier—a sure-kill strike. If you destroy the spot where the magic power concentrates in, it will die no matter the enemy. The scythe inflicts the whole body with a very strong curse that rots everything. It cannot be resisted no matter how powerful the vitality of the afflicted body is}

Certainly, even Haniel who had an amazing regenerative ability seems to be about to collapse soon.

It got blackened, cracked like dried soil... some parts even became dust that dispersed in the wind. The core white girl also met the same fate. She had become stuck like a black statue.

When I landed back on the ground, so is Haniel's remnants.

The remnant fell apart completely upon collision with the ground. Joining the wreckages and debrises of the long devastated village.

The numerous tombstones in this lost village now seemed like it was prepared for Haniel.

<Gluttony skill activated>

<Durability+26000000, Strength+29000000, Magic+24000000, Spirit+28000000, Agility+14000000 will be applied to your stats>

Along with the inorganic voice, an unprecedented amount of stats was added. No skill was added seemingly because of that ERROR thing.

Nhn? It's different than usual. Usually, when I devoured a huge amount of stats, the gluttony skill will act up in delight and tries to overpower me.

However, it remained quiet this time. The hunger is firmly contained, but I don't feel like I'm filled or anything.

However, the stuffiness in my chest still remained.

[What the... what's with this feeling? Is it because the enemy is a machine angel and not a monster?]

{There is such a thing. Although it's a degraded version, it's still like eating your own kin. There is no happiness or sadness. What's left is just... }

Greed didn't touch upon it any further.

While I was looking at the remains of Haniel, Myne joined in.

[You did well. With this, I'll accept Fate as an adult now.]

[That's an honor... but, can I ask you something?]

[What is it?]

At that time, one of the memory flowed from Haniel's core through the mind reading skill.

In a certain facility, the core girl met a girl that resembles Myne.

[That Haniel's core and Myne, did you two know each other?]

[.....No idea, I already forget about those ancient times.]

Although she said so, Myne still kneeled down and stroked the remains of Haniel. I thought so, they were really an acquaintance.

As it is now, I wonder if she's really okay with letting me eat someone she knew. The devoured souls do suffer forever inside the gluttony skill after all.

Myne saw through me already.

[There is no other choice but to think that this is the best. When it comes to machine angels, the only path left is to defeat it. Otherwise, we'll be the ones who die.]

Gallia which was destroyed long ago.

Even though considerable amount of time had passed, its legacies still sleeps. Perhaps, there are still more out there.

And even more dangerous existences might still be lurking out there. Thinking of that made me had a goosebump.

The living natural disaster—Tenryu started to invoke unfamiliar fear inside my mind. I have witnessed at least a glimpse of it through this fight against Haniel.

Myne has been fighting in a world I knew nothing of. And it will remain that way forever. As the holder of similar skill, the time will come for me to fight as well.

But now is not the time. I have more important things to do.

My original goal for coming to Gallia isn't to defeat Haniel.

[Greed, I can unlock it this time, right?]

{Indeed you can. So what will... I don't need to ask, do I?}

[I need even more power. Use up all the stats I've obtained so far, and unlock the third tier.]

{Well said, then let's do it!}

Tens of millions of stats are being absorbed by Greed. It's all the power I've accumulated throughout this journey.

From when I fought at my hometown... from when I fought alongside the sword saint Aaron... and finally, the power I obtained from defeating the machine angel... All of it has lost.

Although the skills remain, the stats went back to rock bottom. I have to raise it back from scratch.

The black scythe emitted light, and changed shape.

As my power is fully absorbed, the light began to settle. And so, I saw the new form of Greed and got surprised.

[No way... Greed... this is.]

{Yes, the power you've yearned the most. That's why, the form of the third tier is this: Demonic Shield. Try to master it completely!}

[Yeah, I'll do that.]

My smile grew wider as I look at the shield larger than my body.
This is the power I've been yearning for... the power to protect others!



Author's note:

The current status after sacrificing my status to strengthen Greed.
(It revert back to my status when I met Greed for the first time)

Fate Graphite Lv 1

Durability: 121

Strength: 151

Magic: 101

Spirit: 101

Agility: 131

Skills: **Gluttony, Appraisal, Mind reading, Concealment, Night Vision, Martial Arts, Sniper, Holy Sword mastery, One-handed Sword mastery, Two-handed Sword mastery, Bow mastery, Spear mastery, Flame magic, Dust magic, Illusion magic, Durability strengthening (S), Durability strengthening (M), Durability strengthening (L), Strength Strengthening (S), Strength Strengthening (M), Magic strengthening (S), Magic strengthening (M), Magic strengthening (L), Spirit strengthening (S), Spirit strengthening (M), Spirit strengthening (L), Agility strengthening (S), Agility strengthening (M), Auto-Recovery, Fire Resistance.**

Chapter 53

In The Land of Gallia

I gave the black shield a try. It was fairly heavy.

Compared to the other forms, this one was the heaviest.

I cannot handle it with only one hand, but it seemed fine if I used both hands to hold it firmly.

{How is my third form?}

[This is quite good. Up until now... we've never been able to properly defend against wide-area attacks. How much can this shield defend against?]

{You can defend against most attacks. In addition, you can also expand its area of defense by supplying it with magic.}

[With that, can we defend against wide area attacks?]

{It's possible. Depending on how you use it}

So I can expand its defense zone by using my magical power?

With this black shield, I can fight while protecting others... yes, it should be possible now. Just as Greed said, it'll depend on how I use it.

And suitably, I'm still in Gallia now. There is no better place to practice.

When I raised my black shield again, Myne approached me with an interested look.

[In the middle of Gallia, unlocking a tier... I'm amazed]

[It's only normal. Greed won't pick the time and place. He's really a greedy one, and selfish too.]

[Ah, that fellow has always been like that since a long time ago. I completely forgot.]

I kinda knew already that Greed and Myne had some kind of relationship in the past. But they don't talk to each other that much.

It doesn't seem like they are on really good terms. Perhaps, they were once battle companions?

I understood about their relationship to some extent, but not too deep either. Also, they didn't interfere with each other. They'll cooperate with each other when it comes to battle too...

How about me then? As a holder of the same kind of skill, what is my relationship compared to Myne?

Well, there are things that don't really need to be worried about. Anyways, I had something to ask to Myne.

[Myne... I have a request, is that okay?]

[U~n, depend]

[Look, my stats are greatly weakened after liberating Greed. Can you help me to raise my stats a little, until I at least can fight on my own? Please!]

Myne seemed to be considering it. Please, say yes.

Travelling through Gallia which full of strong monster with my current stats is just looking to die. Moreover, it's even more dangerous since the monsters always come in horde.

Myne looked at my face, then smiling faintly. What the... that creeps me out.

[Very well. I'll help. You've worked hard to defeat Haniel after all. Moreover, it'll be troublesome if Fate died so easily.]

[Thank you.]

[However, I want you to help me bury this child under this land first.]

Myne pointed to the Haniel's remains. It was broken down, some had even become dust, carried by the wind, but there were still remnants.

The soul had been eaten by me. At the very least, its body can return to the ground.

[I'll be happy to do that]

[Yes... thank you]

That last part was said in a very low voice.

That's surprising. I wonder how that girl really is behind the scenes. I've got to figure her out somehow during our journey. Well let's just help out for now.

In the middle of the cluster of tombstones. That place will be Haniel's final resting place.

Since Myne dug the hole with single blow from her black axe, I could only watch on the side.

After that, I gently insert the remnants of Haniel inside. I had to be extra careful since the remains are still collapsing even now.

There was only few visible remnants, so it didn't take too long to collect them all. To think that what originally was such a large body had been reduced to only a few pieces like this...

It's because I killed it using the killing strike of the second tier, so I should expect nothing less.

After covering the hole back up with her two hands, Myne used the rubble of the village as a tombstone.

The simple grave is completed.

[It's finished]

[Un, it's over.]



For a short while, Myne stared at Haniel's grave. Then as if to shake off something, she shook her head.

[Next is Fate's turn]

[Yeah, I'm thankful.]

[A group of orcs is heading this way. Perhaps they were attracted by the fight earlier.]

[Is that so... how many are they?]

This group of orcs consisted of 2 squads.

That's a huge amount for a mere search party. Perhaps they sensed the outburst of magical power and came to investigate.

By borrowing the power of Gluttony skill, I'll be able to do something soon with this amount of enemies.

[Are you ready?]

[Always ready to go]

[Then let's do this quickly. I'll give the last attack to Fate. I won't allow any mistakes.]

[Aye aye]

The usual, tough Myne.

However, since she'll have to only weaken the monster in order to let me do the decisive strike, won't it be tiring for her? Myne is grouchy, but she's actually a nice fellow.

Oh well, I changed Greed into a black bow to attack from the rear.

As soon as I have sufficient stats, I'll switch to the vanguard. Depending on the situation, I can even try out the black shield, or not. I guess that's too greedy of me.

I should've been exhausted from the fight with Haniel, but strangely I can't help but to

feel hungry for a fight...

This is likely because of the Gluttony skill. It's as if it wants me to rework my way up after eating Haniel just now.

Then I will do just that. I'll keep consuming souls and raise my stats. Otherwise, I won't be able to survive Gallia.

Leaving the desolate village, I saw waves of green moving toward here.

2 squads... that's quite a number. I'll have a nice meal today.

[Let's go!]

[I'm amazed with my motivation despite being weak]

[It won't be for long. It'll take only a blink of an eye... that's what I expect.]

By defeating monsters, Gluttony skill will eat the victim's soul and absorb their power.

I started with low stats and only this 1 skill, but now it's possible for me to defeat enemies with over 20 million stats like the machine angel. I'm weakened now, but soon I'll return to that level once more.

According to Myne, it's possible to absorb power endlessly with the Gluttony Skill. With it, one can break through the limit that gods have set.

But such a nice skill does come with shortcoming. I thought I'll be able to hold it at bay for sure. Now that I've faced the Gluttony skill, I understood.

Perhaps, if I eat Tenryu... but, in order to that... (*TL Note: Tenryu : Heavenly Dragon*).

[Fate, what's wrong?]

Myne tilted her head while standing over the corpse of an orc.

I had just composed myself. An inorganic voice resounds in my head. It never changes; still as cold as ever.

I managed to get back my power somewhat. If it's just fighting a high orc, I could do it by myself without too much difficulty.

I prepared the black sword and approached the high orc leader.

It seemed that it was about to do something, but too slow. I already cut its neck when we passed each other.

<Gluttony skill activated>

<Durability+203400, Strength+217500, Magic+175300, Spirit+154300, Agility+168400 will be applied to your stats>

<Herculean Strength, Durability Strengthening (Large) will be added to your skill>

Alright, I can already fight without Myne's help with this. While looking at the orcs being swept away, I said:

[What will Myne do next?]

[I will walk around Gallia for a while. Will Fate also come along?]

I see, so that's why she had bought food for herself before this. She used to steal my provisions up till now, so I thought that there was something wrong.

I haven't had a change of heart.

[No, I'll return to the fortress city... there is someone I want to protect.]

[I see... that's a shame. Then this is farewell.]

I didn't spare any time to say goodbye to Myne, and just walked away with my back to Gallia.

I got lost in thought a bit, and stopped.

[I have one last request.]

[What is it?]

[If somehow... I lose it... I want Myne to kill me. You are the only one I can ask to do it.]

I'm asking her as a fellow Mortal Sin skill owner.

The one who can beat me, should the Gluttony skill run rampant, is only Myne as far as I know. I want some insurance should that time ever come.

Myne opened her eyes wide, and sighed.

[I understand. I will kill you when that time comes]

[Good... thanks]

With this, I can fight to my heart's content.

Although Greed is bad-mouthing me through the <mind reading>, I don't really mind.

This is something important to me after all. Let's return home, to the fortress city where Roxy is.

I bid Myne farewell and returned to my original purpose. I've come so far for this sole purpose after all.

Then, I took out the skull mask from my breast pocket.



PtF by: traitorATZEN